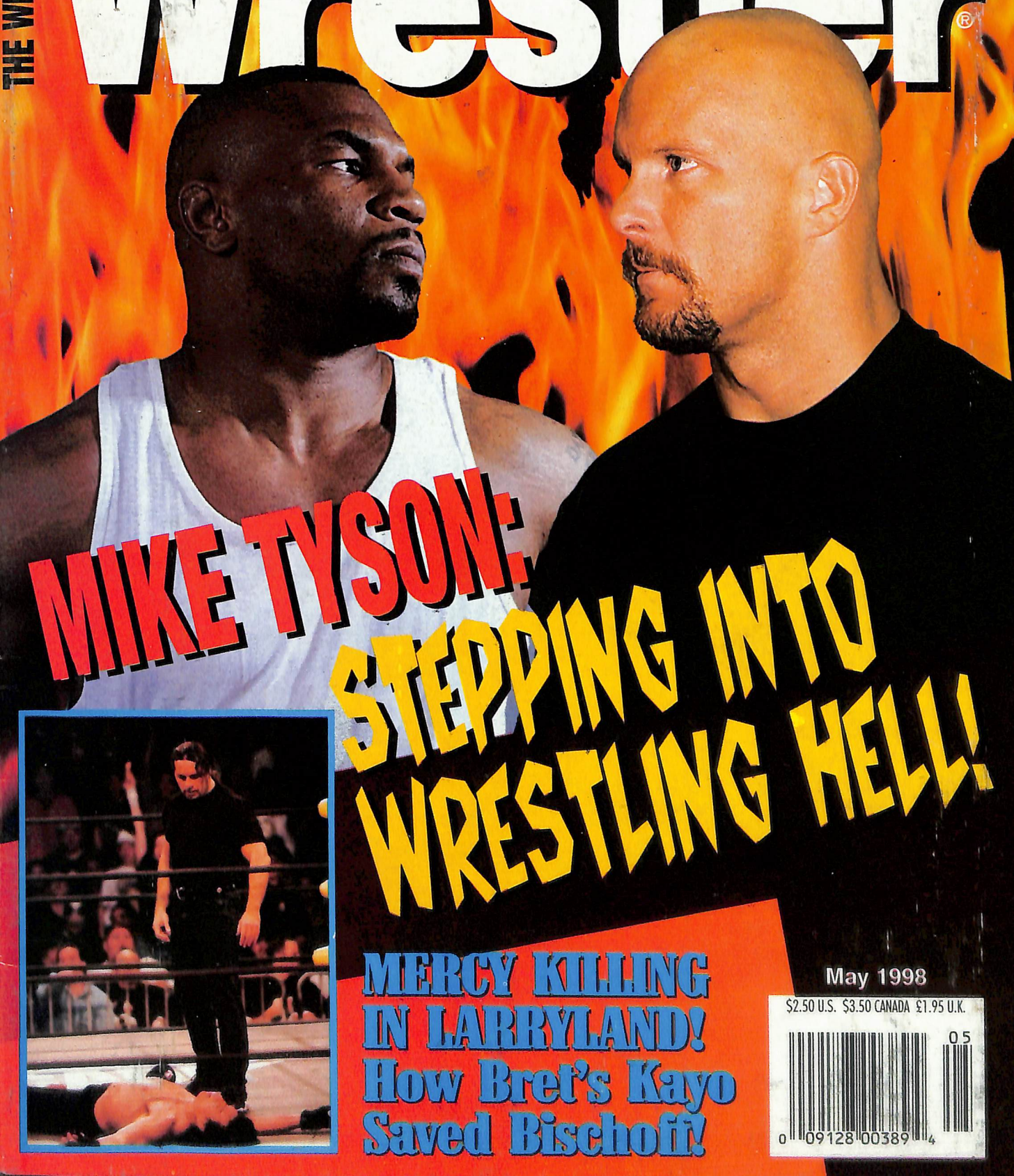


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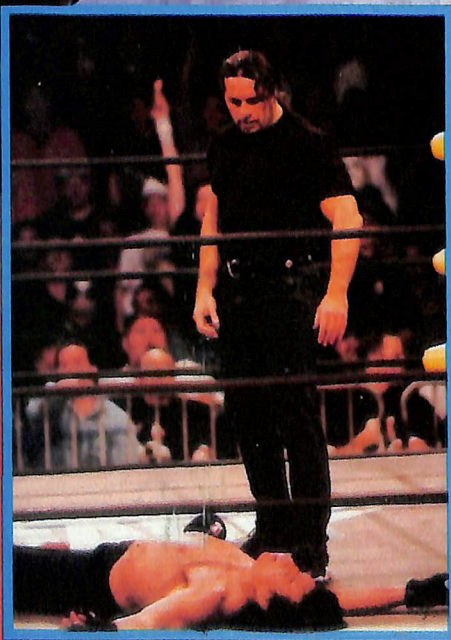
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MIKE TYSON:

**STEPPING INTO
WRESTLING HELL!**



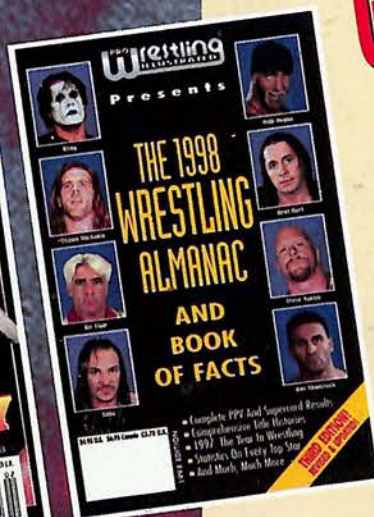
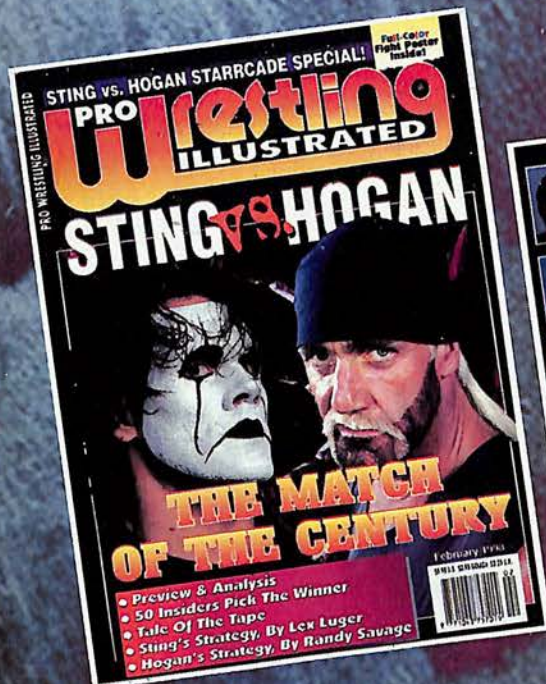
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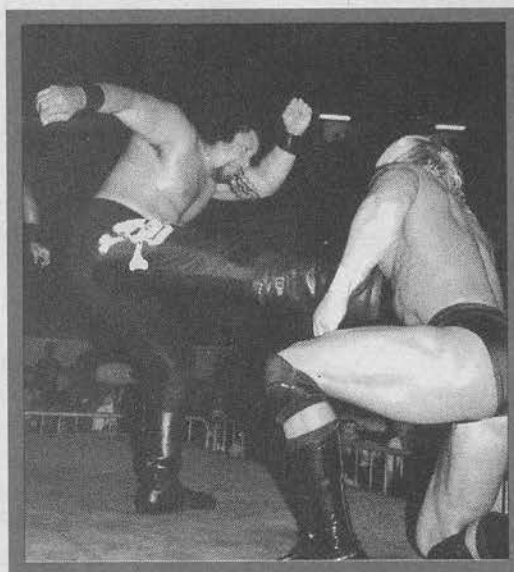
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THE Wrestler

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YOUR Letters



Larry Zbyszko stuns Scott Hall with a clothesline as Hall attempts to interfere in his match with Eric Bischoff. Not all of our readers are big fans of the "Living Legend."

A REAL "LEGEND"?

Haven't we seen enough of Larry Zbyszko already? I've been listening to that blowhard for over 20 years. It feels like 100 years. The last thing I needed to see was his ugly mug in "Spotlight" (March 1998).

However, you guys did a great job of portraying Zbyszko as the coward and turncoat he is. Before long, I bet Zbyszko and the fans will be at each other's throats again.

SCOTT BEAVER
Hop Bottom, PA

It is nice to see Larry Zbyszko get some much-deserved ink ("Spotlight," March 1998). The fact that he is still involved in the sport after 20-plus years makes him a true survivor.

As a wrestler, Larry's accomplishments speak for themselves.

After his retirement, he showed the world that a pro wrestler could be articulate, intelligent, and have a mean golf swing. As a color commentator, he is rivaled only by his *Nitro* partner Mike Tenay. WCW has Zbyszko to thank for coming out of retirement to save *Monday Nitro* from Eric Bischoff and the NWO. I hope he finally gets the respect he deserves.

MANGUS STORLLISON
Rekjavik, Iceland

WHO IS THAT MASKED MAN?

Hey, Rey Misterio Jr., if the prospect of being unmasked one day really upsets you so much, maybe you should spare yourself the pain and quit now ("Rey Misterio Jr.'s Painful Dilemma: 'If I'm Unmasked, Will I Have To Quit?'" March 1998).

Even Harry Burkett, who wrote the story, said, "It's hard to believe that losing a piece of cloth could mean the end of a career." I don't buy this crap about pride and honor. It's only a mask, for crying out loud! If Misterio's wrestling ability is predicated on what mask he wears, then maybe Eddy Guerrero should expose him as the fraud he is!

I'm sure every wrestler who entertains the idea of wearing a mask understands he becomes a target the minute he puts it on. If Rey Misterio Jr. is a championship-caliber wrestler, then he's a championship-caliber wrestler, mask or not. Maybe Misterio has some kind of secret or a

personal problem he's trying to hide. If he does, I wish he would address it himself, because it is only a matter of time before somebody takes his mask off.

TERWOOD GRIMES
Sawane, GA

For any wrestler who chooses to cover his face in the ring, his mask becomes his identity. It is as indispensable as his name. If the wrestler is a fan favorite, you can bet that his mask played a big role in forming the personality that his fans have come to love.

To unmask is to abandon that personality and, in a sense, to abandon your fans. Having your mask removed by an opponent must be especially humiliating because it means that someone else has decided that your identity will be revealed to the world whether you are ready for that to happen or not.

In either case, the end result is never as bad as you think it will



Legendary Tim "Mr. Wrestling" Woods has some words of wisdom for Rey Misterio Jr. He says Misterio shouldn't worry so much about getting unmasked because the fans will still love him.

be. This is especially true for a talented wrestler like Rey Misterio Jr.

If I were you, Rey, I would concentrate on winning the WCW cruiserweight title rather than the possibility of being unmasked by someone like Eddy Guerrero. The glory of a championship moment will exceed the fleeting shame of losing your mask.

I can empathize with you, Rey. For years, I wrestled with a mask. I, too, was afraid of the day I would be exposed. The mask that my fans recognized and loved became a burden to me. And when I took it off, not only did I realize that my career wasn't over, but I felt a great sense of relief at not having to preserve my anonymity any longer.

I am not suggesting that you take your mask off, Rey. I know you have very valid and noble reasons for wearing it. But at the

same time, you should not let it become a stumbling block. Your focus should be on the direction of your career, because you have enough talent to succeed with a mask or without.

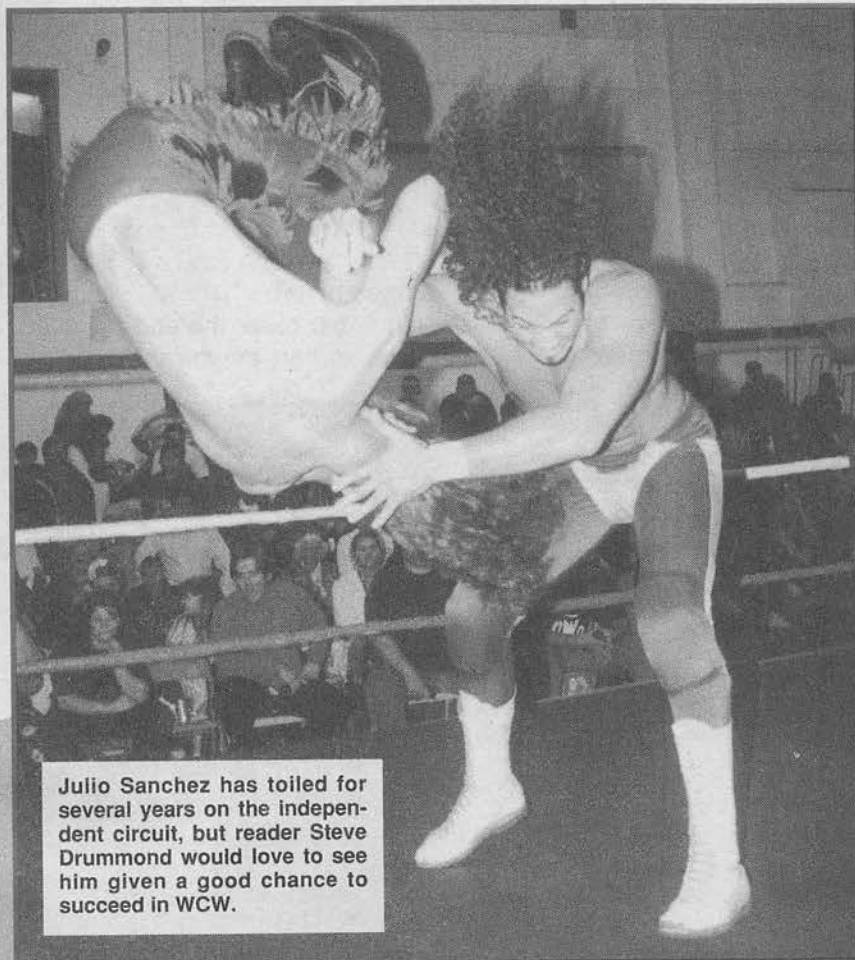
As I look back at my career, I must admit that my greatest achievements occurred after I unmasked, and that is because I was able to concentrate on refining my skills. I won because I worked hard, not because I wore a mask.

TIM "MR. WRESTLING" WOODS
Charlotte, NC

SIGN HIM UP!

I can't believe none of the major promotions has come to appreciate the great skills of Julio Sanchez. I've been following Sanchez all over the East Coast independent scene for two years.

(Continued on page 50)



Julio Sanchez has toiled for several years on the independent circuit, but reader Steve Drummond would love to see him given a good chance to succeed in WCW.

THE Wrestler

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WHAT'S

Happëning

By Bill Apter

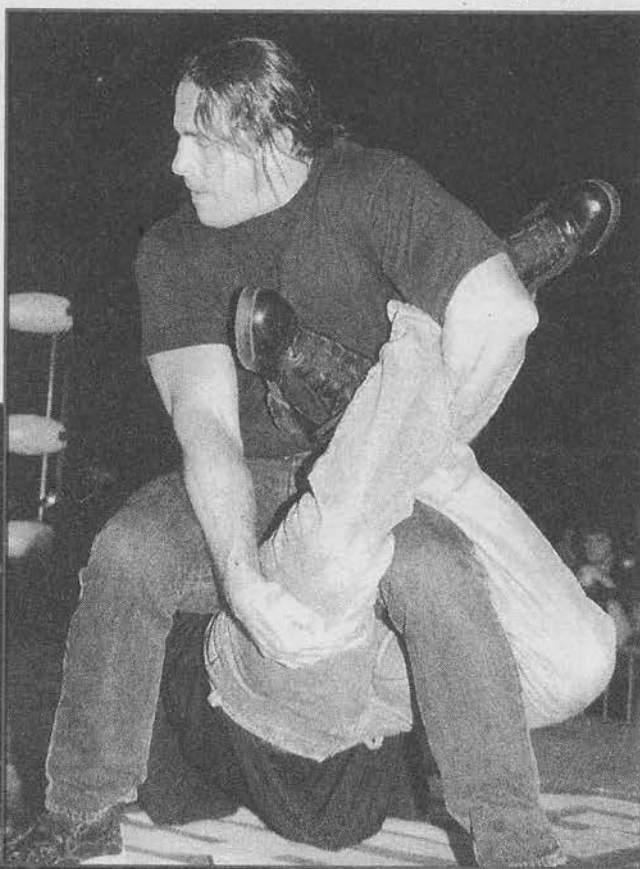
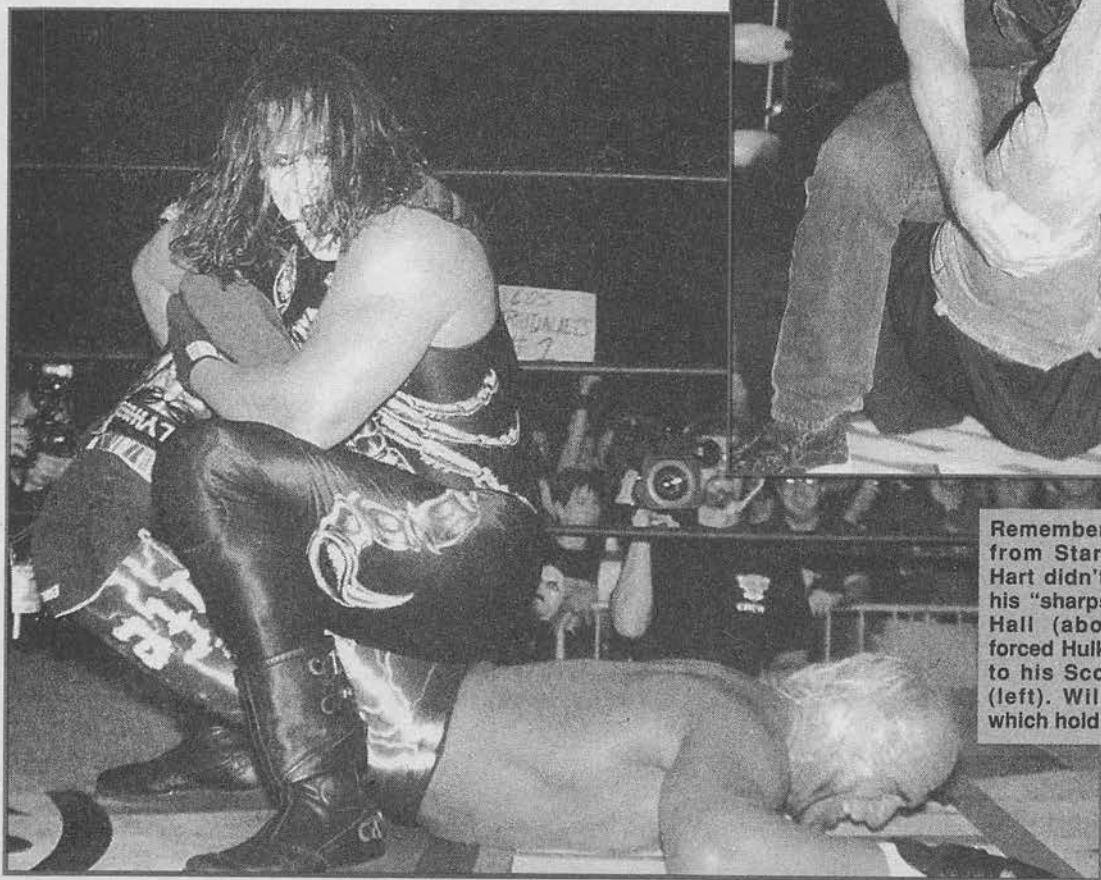
BRET HART IS seeking a showdown with **Sting**. The "Hitman" tells me that for years, people have been asking him if his "sharpshooter" is as good a finisher as Sting's Scorpion deathlock.

"I used to tell people that the 'sharpshooter' is the best, period, the end," Bret told me in a recent interview. "However, since I've been in WCW, there are a lot of wrestlers, fans, and promoters who won't settle for my pat answer. They're pushing me to prove my point. Hey, I never duck an issue. I welcome the chance to

prove to Sting and the rest of the world that the 'sharpshooter' is the better of the two holds."

I spoke with a confidant of Sting, a man who works at Sting's suburban Atlanta gymnasium. He told me that, like Hart, Sting is always being asked to compare the holds. "Sting and I used to watch some of Bret's matches on TV, and we'd talk about how easy it would be to escape from his 'sharpshoot-

er,'" he said. "Sting used to joke about wrestling him to see which hold was better. Now that Bret is here, I can tell you that Sting has not changed his mind. He's going



Remember these moments from Starrcade '97? Bret Hart didn't hesitate to slap his "sharpshooter" on Scott Hall (above), and Sting forced Hulk Hogan to submit to his Scorpion deathlock (left). Will we soon learn which hold is best?

to want a match against Bret very soon."

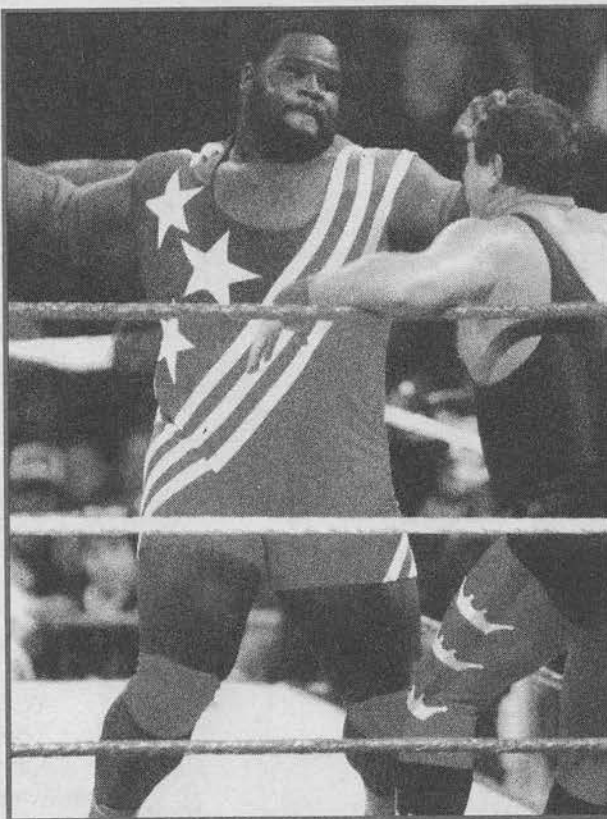
J.J. Dillon, head of the WCW Executive Committee tells me, "It would be a great match, especially if both parties would agree that the match can only end by submission to the 'sharpshooter' or the Scorpion deathlock. It has the potential to be the biggest non-title match in the history of WCW, and I am hoping to go into negotiations with both Bret Hart and Sting very soon."

Ken Shamrock is still in a state of shock after being attacked by his friend and tag team partner **Mark Henry**, then seeing Henry join **The Nation of Domination**.

"Mark Henry ... who would have thought he wasn't trustworthy?" Shamrock ruminated as he recalled the shocking event. "Mark Henry, a symbol of American courage. A man who wanted to be a role model to kids is now someone children can despise. It makes me sick!"

Said Henry: "My friend **Rocky Maivia** recruited me. I see what a career upswing "The Rock" has had since he joined the Nation, and since the WWF promoters aren't giving me the right matches, I'm sure I'll get them real fast now that "The Rock" is helping me with the negotiations. I know I made the right move, and I chose to make my statement by showing Ken Shamrock—and the rest of the world—that I meant business."

In the meantime, **Faarooq** is furious with Rocky for recruiting Henry. "I am the leader of the



Mark Henry earned the fans' cheers when he tried to silence Jerry "The King" Lawler. He's hearing nothing but boos now as the newest member of the Nation of Domination.

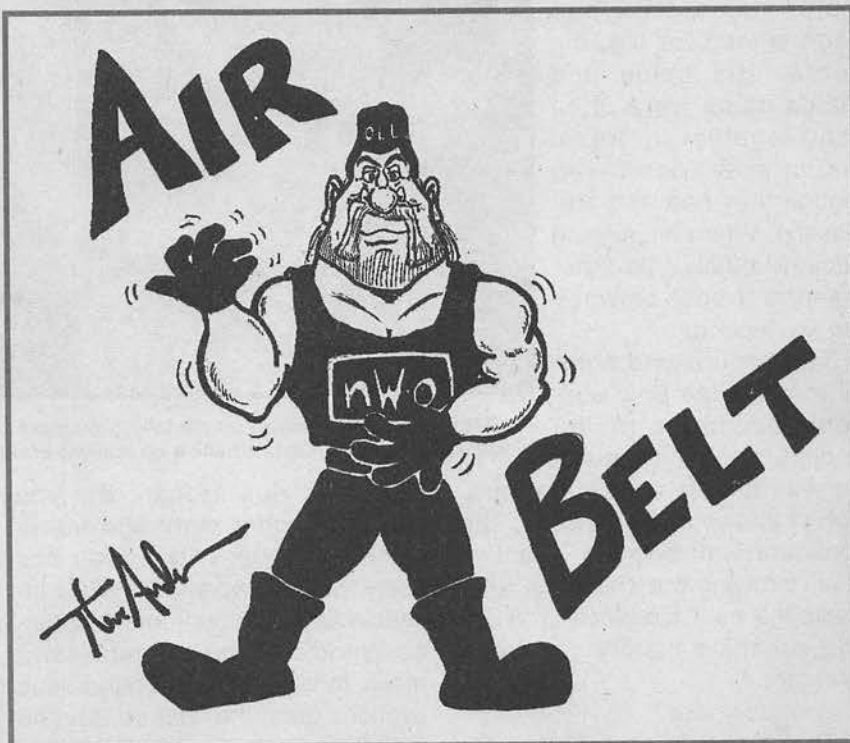
Nation, and only I do the recruiting!" he said. "I've said it before, and I'll say it again: Rocky Maivia better start knowing his place, or his days in the Nation are over!"

I see a split happening very soon.

Marty Jannetty, best known for his years with **Shawn Michaels** as **The Rockers**, is now wrestling in WCW. Ironically, he's using Shawn's finishing move, the superkick. "A lot of people might not remember, but we both used it back when we teamed," Marty said. "Shawn made the move famous, and I intend to make my mark here in WCW with it as well" ... **Flash Funk** is in ECW, using his old name, **2 Cold Scorpio** ... If you notice that the WWF's **Kurrgan** is wrestling better than he was a few months ago, credit **Dory Funk Jr.** He took Kurrgan and a host of other young WWF wrestlers and worked on their skills for a two-week period earlier this year.

(Continued on page 52)

Steve Anderson's View



NO Holds Barred

with Steve Anderson

IN THE SPRING of 1994, Ric Flair was at the top of his game. He was the reigning WCW World champion and was enjoying successful title defenses. He was proving that he was not past his prime and that the Flair era could and would continue for years. He was secure and comfortable.

Then an outsider arrived in *his* promotion. A major name who had been signed for big, big bucks. His name and Flair's name were often used together in dream match scenarios (even though they had met previously). When his signing became official, fans demanded a bout between the two legends.

The secure and comfortable "Nature Boy" suddenly became a raving and paranoid madman.

He was threatened by the intrusion of this so-called outsider. The confident Flair became a ranting Flair, throwing out challenge after challenge as if his place in WCW and wrestling history had been threatened.

Sound familiar?

That threat to Flair four years



Ric Flair has always backed up his talk throughout the course of his 25-year career. Can he back it up against Bret Hart?

back was Hulk Hogan. But you could take that story and transplant it in 1998. Lately, Flair has been wrestling very well. While he seems far removed from his coveted World belt, he still remains a major force in WCW. Thunderous ovations greet the "Nature Boy" no matter where he is. Just like 1994,

he is secure and comfortable.

Well, he had been.

Then came Bret Hart.

Flair is obsessed with the "Hitman." He resents Hart's claims that he is the "best" so much that he confronts him every time Hart utters his famous "best there is" phrase. It's as if he can't stop himself from doing so. Flair's actions border on manic. His speeches are now rambling and repetitive. He defies Bret to say the phrase over and over ... and Bret responds with equal defiance.

But why? Why would a man who has an undisputed place in history become as insecure as a green rookie climbing the ladder? He has won 13 world titles—more than anyone. He is one of only

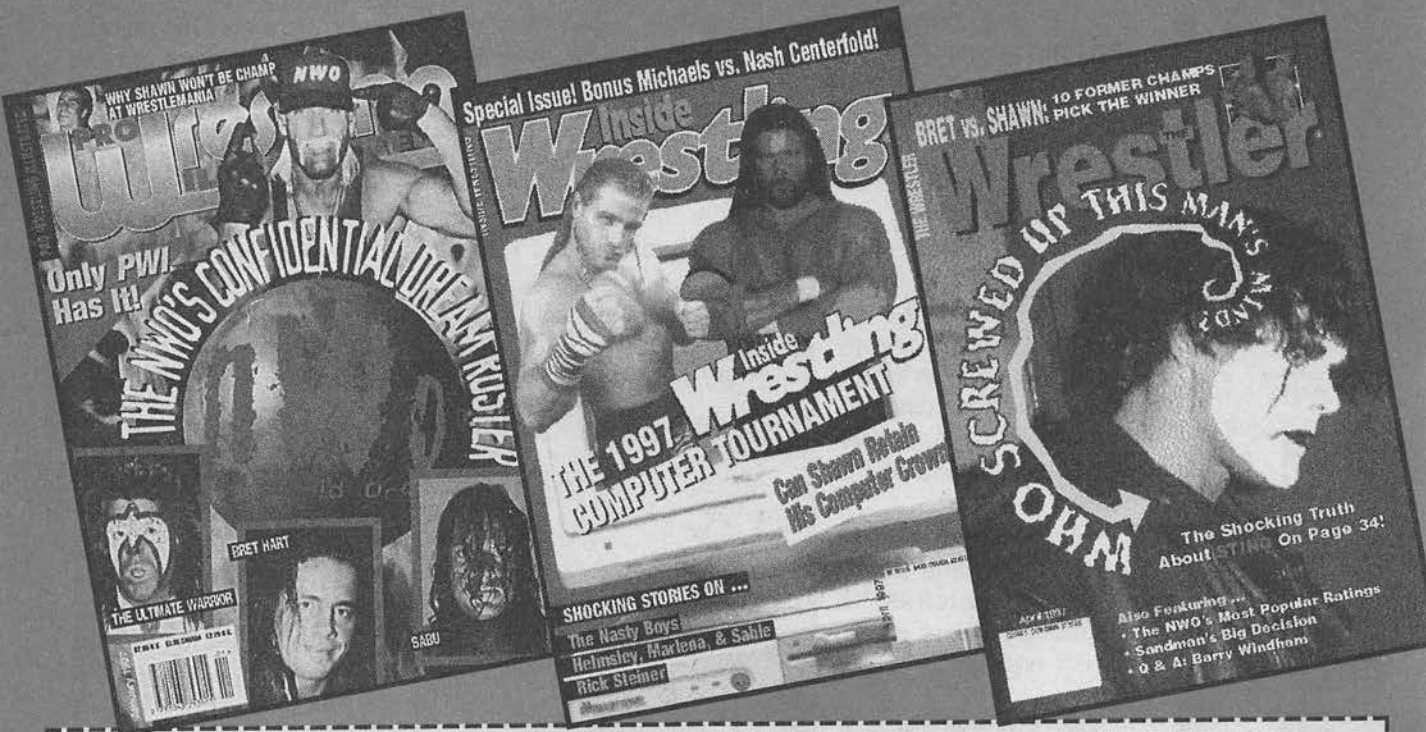
four wrestlers to have held both the WWF and WCW world belts. Others may claim it, but Flair really is a true living legend.

The Hogan and Hart situations do have striking similarities. Both men were involved in major feuds with Flair. Both men clashed with

(Continued on page 54)

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By
Andy
Rodriguez

Revisiting

WHEN YOU'RE VERY talented and you're not being recognized for it, you can do one of two things. You can keep plugging away with the hope that someone will eventually take notice and give you the applause you deserve, or you can do something drastic to get everyone's attention.

Chris Jericho decided to do something drastic.

"This is what it took," Jericho said. "This is what I was forced to do!" In Jericho's mind at least, he was "forced" to beat up a ring announcer. Then he was "forced" to act like a crybaby. Finally, he was "forced" to cause a fellow competitor to suffer a major defeat.

To be fair to Jericho, he has been on the lower level of recognition in WCW. Fans and reporters alike have overlooked his impressive skills in favor of the hotter stories. If he'd devoted more of his energy to the war with the NWO, it may have been different, but Jericho was more interested in building his career.

He received a little praise after losing several close matches to "Diamond" Dallas Page, but not enough to satisfy him.

"DDP's one of the best in this sport," said Jericho, "and I gave him the toughest matches he's ever had in WCW. What did it get me? Squat!"

So, after a loss to Page on *WCW Monday Nitro*, the emotional walls of Jericho came tumbling down. He attacked Penzer, ripping his tuxedo in the process. Then he took out his aggressions on a defenseless steel chair.

The outburst was stunning, but it looked like an aberration, especially after he came out at the next *Nitro* with a new tuxedo for Penzer and an apology. He did not, however, come out with a changed attitude. By the end of the night, he had again lost his cool.

He was finally getting the attention he sought, and he took advantage of it.

"I'm a role model!" proclaimed Jericho. "Kids should be looking up to me as the great wrestler that I am! Everybody should be looking up to me! I want to know where

my title matches are! Somebody give me a shot at a belt!"

Somebody gave him an interview on the following *Nitro* instead. During the course of Jericho's whining, moaning, and complaining, Rey Misterio Jr. came to the ring for his cruiserweight title match against the champion, Juventud Guerrera. First Jericho insisted that Misterio not infringe on his "interview time," then he apologized and began praising him as his favorite cruiserweight.

Misterio may very well be Jericho's favorite cruiserweight. He's also his favorite sucker. Jericho acted as if he were leaving the ring, then pounced on Misterio, leaving him so badly beaten he could hardly put up a fight against Guerrera.

"Yeah, I'm real sorry about Rey," Jericho said, sarcastically. "All he did was get in my way! I don't need anyone interfering when

it's my turn in the spotlight! He had a match? So what? I had a purpose! I think I demonstrated it pretty well."

The fact that I'm writing about Jericho does demonstrate that he's achieved his goal of getting some recognition. Maybe now he will get those title matches he may or may not deserve.

That isn't certain. What is certain, though, is that he has one angry foe in Misterio.

"He probably thinks all I care about is the cruiserweight belt," Misterio said.

"It's true the title is very important to me. But it's also important that I show Jericho he won't get away with attacking me on national television. I don't know about people not paying attention to him, but I sure am now."

Poor Jericho. He has a great wrestler on his tail, and it didn't have to be that way. He could have kept plugging away. He's too good to escape notice for long. He's just too impatient.

Says Misterio: "That's his problem, not mine! I am going after Chris because I am very angry. But if Chris chooses, he can learn a valuable lesson. Blind ambition often blinds you to the important aspects of life, such as respect, loyalty, and friendship. Come on, Chris, prove you have a real 'Lion Heart!'" □



Jericho throws another tantrum

Bloodbaths, Brawls and Women

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ECW TV 16 Sandman vs. Cactus Jack (3 matches), Raven vs. Dreamer, Melanie vs. Guerrero, Benoit and Melanie vs. Mikey and Norman Smiley, Raven and Richards vs. Dreamer and Mikey.

ECW TV 17 Sandman vs. Cactus (Barbed Wire Match), Sandman vs. Shane Douglas, Beulah vs. Luna Vachon, Public Enemy vs. Pitbulls, and the ECW debut of the Gangstas.

ECW TV 18 Raven and Richards beating Public Enemy for the Tag Titles, Taz vs. 2 Cold Scorpio, Taz and Eddy Guerrero vs. Melanie and Scorpio (twice), Cactus and Dreamer and Pitbulls vs. Raven and Richards and Dudley. Cactus and Melanie and Scorpio vs. Steiner and Guerrero, Public Enemy vs. Gangstas.

ECW TV 20 Melanie vs. Guerrero (Final ECW Match), Francine vs. Beulah (Cat Fight), Raven and Richards vs. Pitbulls, Steiners vs. Scorpio and Benoit, Raven and Richards vs. Pitbulls (Double Dog Collar Match).

ECW TV 21 Steiner and Taz vs. Eliminators and Scorpio, Steve Austin imitating Hulk Hogan, Rey Misterio Jr. Vs. Psicosis (twice), Public Enemy and Mikey vs. Sandman and Scorpio and New Jack (Cage Match).

ECW TV 22 Public Enemy vs. Gangstas, Taz and Rick Steiners vs. Eliminators. Cactus vs. Dreamer, Misterio Jr. and Konnan vs. LaParka and Psicosis, Sandman vs. Mikey.

ECW TV 23 Cactus and Raven vs. Dreamer and Funk, Heavenly Bodies debut in ECW, Konnan vs. Jason, Mikey vs. Misterio Jr., Steve Austin vs. Mikey (twice), Sabu return to ECW.

ECW TV 24 Steve Austin and Mikey and Sandman (3 way dance), Misterio Jr. Vs. Psicosis (Mexican Death Match), Raven vs. Dreamer, Public Enemy vs. Heavenly Bodies, Shane Douglas returns to ECW.

ECW TV 25 Eliminators vs. 911 and Rey Misterio Jr., Konnan vs. Sandman (Bloodbath), Sabu vs. Steve Richards, Rob Van Dam vs. Axl Rotten, Scorpio vs. Mikey, Sabu vs. Van Dam, Misterio Jr. vs. Juventud Guerrera, Headhunters return, Sandman vs. Raven.

ECW TV 26 Raven and Richards vs. Dreamer and Douglas, Brian Pillman debuts in ECW. Headhunters vs. Bruise Brothers, Raven vs. Douglas (Pillman runs in). Sabu vs. Scorpio, Eliminators and Richards vs. Pitbulls and Francine (Triple Dog Collar Match).

ECW TV 27 Headhunters vs. Gangstas, Cactus vs. Chris Jericho, Misterio Jr. vs. Guerrero (2 matches), Cactus vs. Mikey (Cactus' last ECW match). Gangstas - Eliminators Brawl)

ECW TV 28 Raven and Bruise Brothers vs. Dreamer, Douglas and Sandman. Sabu vs. Mikey, Taz vs. Jericho, Pitbulls and Dreamer vs. Bruises and Lee, Dreamer vs. Lee, Raven vs. Douglas.

ECW TV 29 Sabu vs. VanDam, Douglas vs. Scorpio, Taz vs. Scorpio, Jericho vs. Mikey, Jericho vs. Scorpio, Eliminators and Lee vs. Dreamer and Gangstas.

ECW TV 30 Brian Lee and Bruise Brothers vs. Dreamer and Pitbulls, Raven vs. Pitbull 2, VanDam vs. Mikey, Douglas vs. Pitbull 2, Sandman vs. Richards.

ECW TV 31 Jericho vs. Pitbull #2, Dreamer vs. Lee (Weapons Match), Gangstas vs. Eliminators, Sabu vs. VanDam, Eliminators vs. Sabu and Mikey, Jericho vs. Douglas vs. Pitbull #2 vs. Scorpio (4 Way Dance).

ECW TV 32 Sabu vs. Louie Spicolli, Sandman vs. Richards, Eliminators vs. Okano and Yamada, Dreamer vs. Raven from Japan, Shane Douglas vs. Pitbull #2, and a 4-way dance for the Tag Titles.

ECW TV 33 Doug urnas vs. VanDam, Taz vs. Dreamer, Lee vs. Terry Gordy (Bad Street Match), Dudley vs. Axl and D-von Dudley.

ECW TV 34 Sabu and VanDam vs. Furnas and Kroffat (30 minute draw) Taz vs. Johnny Smith, Eliminators and Lee vs. Dreamer and Gordy and Steve Williams, Douglas vs. Pitbull #2, Lee and Richards vs. Dreamer and Sandman (Ultimate Jeopardy).

ECW TV 35 Jericho vs. Scorpio, Eliminators vs. Gangstas, Taz vs. Guido (Shoot Fight), Sandman vs. Scorpio, Douglas vs. Dreamer, Sabu and VanDam vs. Kroffat and Furnas.

ECW TV 36 ECW Royal Rumble, Douglas and Francine vs. Dreamer and Beulah, Taz vs. VanDam, Raven vs. Mikey, Raven v. Sandman, Candito vs. VanDam.

ECW TV 37 Gangstas vs. Morton and Rich, Raven vs. Sandman (Texas Death Match), Raven vs. Sandman (Hair vs. Belt), Raven vs. Steve Williams, Funk vs. Brian Lee.

ECW TV 38 Funk vs. Tommy Rich, Sabu and VanDam vs. Eliminators (Tables and Ladders), Dudley vs. Gangstas, Funk and Dreamer vs. Lee and Raven, Lance Storm vs. Balls Mahoney.

ECW TV 39 Taz vs. VanDam, Funk vs. Brian Lee, Balls vs. Sandman (Twice), Funk vs. Axl Rotten, Sabu vs. Spike Dudley, Raven and Shane vs. Dreamer and Funk, Great Sasuke and Hamada and nanina vs Taka and Men's Tech and Dick Togo (Michinoku Pro G-Man).

ECW TV 40 Preview of "Barely Legal", Eliminators vs. Dudley vs. Gangstas (3 Way Dance), Video clips of "Barely Legal", Rob Van Dam vs. Pitbull #2, and the Evolution of Mr. Monday Night.

ECW TV 41 Gangstas vs. Dudley vs. Eliminators (3 Way Dance), Bam Bam Bigelows return to ECW, Rude's debut as TV commentator, Sabu and Van Dam vs. Taz and Candito, Dreamer vs. Spicolli, Sandman vs. Balls, Raven and Richards vs. Funk and Dreamer.

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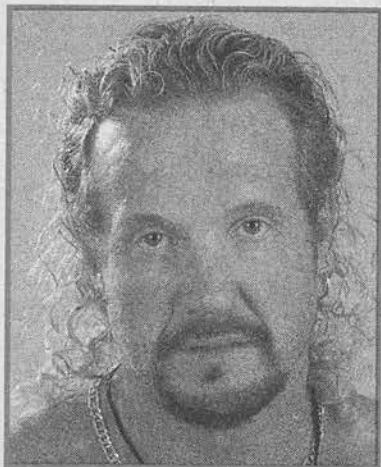
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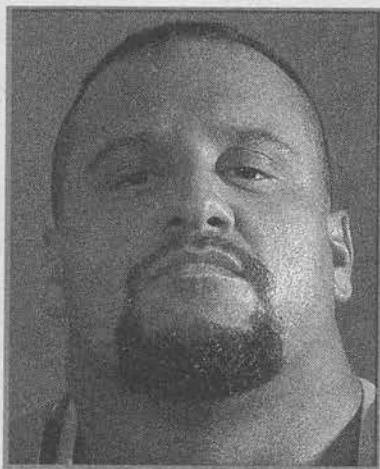
THUMBS UP



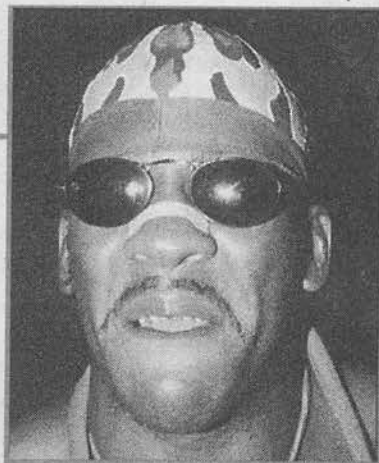
Thumbs Up to “Diamond” Dallas Page. The new WCW U.S. champion wrestled a spectacular match against Curt Hennig to win the belt at Starrcade '97. Although Hennig pounded his back and ribs for most of the first eight minutes, Page never gave up and proved that his “Diamond cutter” can be executed at any time from any portion of the ring. Congratulations to Page, who five years ago was at the bottom of wrestling’s heap—a manager with no prospects of being a wrestler. Now he’s at the top, and it couldn’t have happened to a better man.



Thumbs Up to Riki Choshu. Talk about going out in style! Talk about leaving in a blaze of glory! It makes you wonder: Why did Choshu retire when he obviously has so much gas remaining in his tank? On the day he officially retired, Choshu won four out of five matches, including a spectacular victory over the great Jushin Liger in a little more than five minutes. Well, it’s too bad. The very same day Choshu retired, Antonio Inoki announced his last match would be in April. The strange thing is, both he and Choshu are still capable of beating some of the best wrestlers in the world.



Thumbs Up to Taz. It’s not like Taz to drive ECW’s welcome wagon, but that’s exactly what he did after beating 2 Cold Scorpio (a.k.a. Flash Funk) with his “Taz-mission” to retain his TV title in a match in January. After the match, as Scorpio bowed to the cheering fans who applauded his return to ECW, Doug Furnas and Brakus attacked him from behind. Taz rushed out from the dressing room and chased Furnas and Brakus from the ring. Taz then grabbed the microphone and told Scorpio, “I ain’t never heard of anybody called Flash Funk. Anytime you want to wrestle for a *real* promotion, you’re welcome in my locker room.”



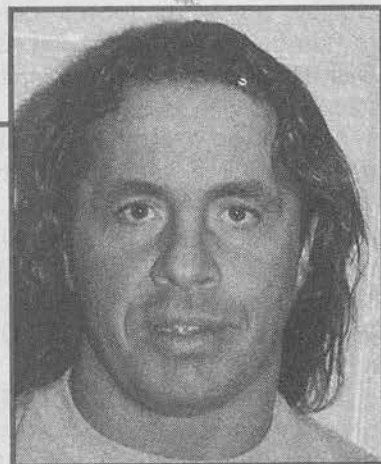
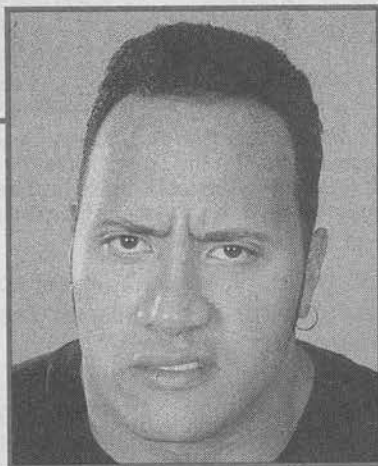
Thumbs Up to Booker T. Who would have thought that either member of Harlem Heat was capable of winning a major WCW singles title? Not us. That’s why we were shocked when Booker T wrestled the best singles match of his life and destroyed Disco Inferno for the WCW TV title on December 29. The victory was no fluke. Booker T scored a clean, decisive pin that left no doubts about the identity of the new champion. Now if Booker T and Stevie Ray can continue to get along with this new factor in their tag team relationship, the wrestling world might have a new singles powerhouse on its hands.

THUMBS Down



Thumbs Down to Sting. Getting angry for being done wrong is one thing. Getting angry because you were the beneficiary of a mistake and the mistake was corrected is absolutely ridiculous. Sting acted like a child at the first *WCW Thunder* telecast when J.J. Dillon announced that the World-title had been held up. What did Sting expect? He was lucky the belt wasn't returned to Hulk Hogan, which is exactly what should have happened after Starrcade. But instead of accepting the decision, Sting told Dillon, "You got no guts." What was Dillon supposed to do, let an obviously wrong decision stand? Of course not.

Thumbs Down to Bret Hart. We may now proclaim the "Hitman" as the worst there ever is, the worst there was, and the worst there ever will be ... when it comes to being a special guest referee. Not only did Hart destroy the Larry Zbyszko vs. Eric Bischoff match at Starrcade '97 by punching out Bischoff—uh, Bret, a referee isn't supposed to do that—but then he stuck his nose where it didn't belong, into the Sting vs. Hulk Hogan title match. Let's face it, guest referees tend to be lousy, but they usually blow only one match. Hart blew two. Way to go!



Thumbs Down to Rocky Maivia. Talk about an ambush! Maivia, who for weeks had been claiming to be the leader of The Nation of Domination, pulled a fast one when he announced that Ken Shamrock would face the leader of the NOD on *Raw Is War* in early-January. According to Maivia, that was Faarooq. Well, there was an opportune turn of events for Maivia but not for Faarooq, who was overwhelmed by Shamrock. Obviously, Maivia was putting Faarooq in a position in which he would have to prove himself. Obviously, Faarooq didn't want the match. Obviously, Maivia knew that. Now we know this: Maivia is a deceitful crook.

Thumbs Down to Chris Jericho. WCW fans, quite frankly, are getting tired of Jericho's post-loss tantrums. What's worse is that Jericho compounds his rantings with self-congratulations and insincere apologies. His unprovoked attacks on ring announcer Dave Penzer and Rey Misterio Jr. are indefensible. Week after week, Jericho drops close matches to the federation's top stars, proving he is not in the same league as men such as Ric Flair and "Diamond" Dallas Page. A great competitor would learn something from these losses; Jericho comes undone by them. He is the epitome of poor sportsmanship.



CORRESPONDENTS

Reports

Philadelphia, PA (Correspondent—Timothy A. Walker): Is the "Gangstanator" tandem of Gangsta New Jack and Eliminator John Kronus going to be short-lived? The two teamed with Spike Dudley, only to go down in defeat to Buh Buh Ray, D-Von, and "Big" Dick Dudley. New Jack wasn't at all pleased with the loss.

New Jack brought his usual trash can full of weapons with him to the ring. As everyone split up into pairs to fight, New Jack whacked Buh Buh Ray with a guitar in the ring as Kronus fought D-Von and Spike battled "Big" Dick on the arena floor.

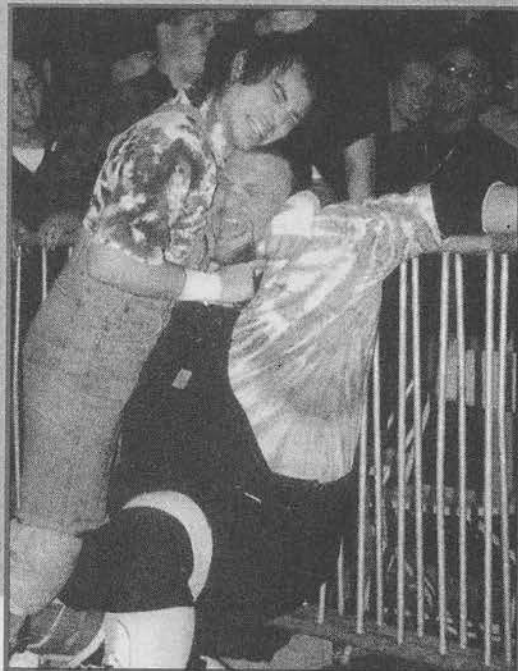
At one point, Buh Buh Ray press-slammed Spike from the ring and into the crowd. As this was happening, D-Von nailed Kronus with a chair until he was knocked out, leaving New Jack to fend for himself. After a "Big" Dick splash in the corner, Sign Guy Dudley handcuffed New Jack to the top rope. Once New Jack was secured, the Dudleys took turns torturing him with a cheese grater and chairs. Spike tried to save New Jack, but was hurled from the ring and through the timekeeper's table. Kronus then stormed the ring, chasing the three to the floor, but blocking Sign Guy from his exodus. Sign Guy then got flattened by a 450-splash from Kronus.

As Kronus got up, Buh Buh Ray caught him in a "Buh Buh cutter" and got a two-count. The Dudleys then triple-teamed Kronus, with D-Von setting up a "Buh Buh cutter"

for his brother to get the pinfall victory. After the match, New Jack got in his partner's face and started yelling at him.

In other bouts: Tommy Dreamer, Axl Rotten, & B. Mahoney defeated Tracey Smothers, Little Guido, & Tommy Rich ... Jerry Lynn defeated Chris Candido by submission ... Gran Hamada defeated Gran Naniwa ... Justin Credible beat The Great Sasuke ... Al Snow pinned Roadkill ... Rob Van Dam pinned Bam Bam Bigelow after Shane Douglas interfered ... ECW TV champ Taz defeated 2 Cold Scorpio. After the match, Doug Furnas and Brakus attacked 2 Cold, but Taz came to his defense ... The Sandman pinned Sabu in a "Stairway To Hell" match in which a roll of barbed wire hung above the ring and could only be reached and used by climbing a ladder.

Martinsburg, WV (Correspondent—Jeff Amdur): Shane Shadows thought he and former nemesis Switchblade had put their differences behind them when Switchblade agreed to team with him for a grudge match against Diablos Macabre and The Cremator at a Championship Pro Wrestling card. Little did he know that by the end of the match, he'd find out that Switchblade hadn't



Spike Dudley (choking Buh Buh Ray Dudley by a guardrail) was launched into the crowd twice during a tag team brawl in Philadelphia. Spike teamed with The Gangstanators in a valiant effort against three other Dudleys.

switched at all. Instead, he set up Shadows for a beating at the hands of his rivals.

Several minutes into the match, Shadows was thrown from the ring and to the floor. Switchblade went over to Shadows with a chair in hand to seemingly protect his fallen partner from the approaching Macabre and Cremator. Instead, Switchblade nailed Shadows with a wicked chair shot before dropping the chair and leaving the ring-side area.

Abandoned, Shadows was left at the mercy of Macabre and Cremator, who double-teamed him

(Continued on page 56)

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YOU Asked Us

Q: "My question is for 'The Innovator Of Violence,' Tommy Dreamer: ECW fans often hand objects to wrestlers competing in a match, especially if the action spills to the arena floor. Do you think it's dangerous to encourage this practice?"—Judy Katz, Dodge City, KS

A: "I think the intensity the fans bring is what puts ECW head-and-shoulders above the other federations," Dreamer replied. "ECW is an attitude, a state of mind, and a way of life. ECW encourages uncensored free speech, meaning fans can chant or shout whatever they want. But I admit it's a very fine line. Fans, especially at ECW Arena, have handed me frying pans,



ECW fans become rowdy when the action goes out of the ring. Is it okay for fans to hand foreign objects to the wrestlers? Tommy Dreamer tries not to encourage the practice.

rolling pins, and even cheese graters. Sometimes, especially if someone like Shane Douglas or Rob Van Dam is breathing down my neck, I'll grab something from a fan and pound my opponent with it. I wouldn't ever encourage fans to bring stuff, but sometimes I just get caught up in the moment and grab whatever I can."

• • •

Q: "My question is for Jody Hamilton, otherwise known as The Assassin: I have been a big fan of yours for over 20 years. Several times over recent months, I have seen you on WCW TV shows wearing an identification badge. Are you a member of the WCW Executive Committee?"—Juan Little, Miami, FL

A: "No, I'm not," laughed Hamilton. "But maybe I should be. Hell, I don't even know who the members of the Executive Committee are. Actually, I'm a production coordinator with WCW. There's a lot of work involved with putting together so many shows every week. In many ways, it's tougher than being a wrestler because there's so much responsibility. It's fun because the younger wrestlers—and some of the older ones—come to me for advice all the time. Not only that, but J.J. Dillon is always



Jody Hamilton, a.k.a. The Assassin, confers with J.J. Dillon. Now a production coordinator for WCW, Hamilton often gives advice to administrators and competitors alike.

asking my opinion about situations related to WCW politics. His willingness to hear everyone's views is what makes him such a good chairman."

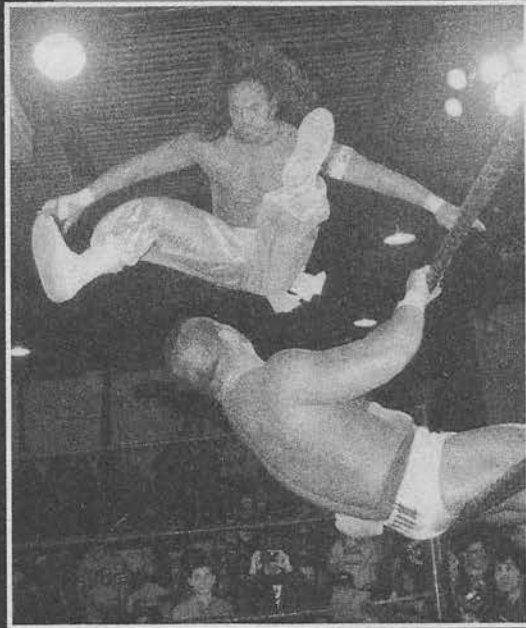
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Q: "I'd like to ask 'Stone-Cold' Steve Austin a question: You already proved you can dominate Rocky Maivia, but I was wondering what you would do if Kane came down to the ring while you were wrestling."—Ben Taylor, Mount Holly, VT

A: "Well, Ben, or whatever the hell your name is, I don't give a damn who comes down to the ring," Austin remarked. "If anybody wants to see me, they can come down to the ring and eat a little 'stunner.' Am I supposed to give a damn about Kane? That stupid jackass would *need* a cane after I dropped his head on the mat.

(Continued on page 57)

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Introducing

By Craig Peters

FRENCHY RIVIERA

BEFORE WE GET too far into this, let's make one thing perfectly clear: It's Riviera, as in the South of France (from where Frenchy is billed), not Rivera, as in Victor, the hard-nosed veteran of the mat wars.

But that's about the only thing that *is* clear when you consider the name of this 5'10", 450-pounder with a pedigree that is both complicated and impressive.

Leading up to his 1992 debut, Frenchy was being trained by his brother, Kenny Arden, a rising star in Georgia-based Tri-State Wrestling. It came to his attention that one of his all-time wrestling heroes, Happy Humphrey, was ailing in a nearby nursing home. A Tri-State promoter suggested Frenchy visit Humphrey and even offered to set up the meeting.

"That came as amazing news to me," Frenchy recently told *THE WRESTLER*. "I mean, think about it: Here you are, training to enter this sport, your childhood hero is only a few miles away, and you hear he's willing to meet you and eager to have some company. Incredible!"

Frenchy went to visit Humphrey, who was only too eager to strike up a friendship.

"Talk about the realization of a dream!" Frenchy says. "We used to talk for hours on end. He was confined to a wheelchair, of course, and in his 70s, but he had an awful lot to say, and some pretty good advice, too. He said to always give 100 percent in the ring, no matter what, whether there are three or 3,000 fans in the

Photos by Timothy A. Walker



Frenchy Riviera is enjoying a fair amount of success under the guidance of manager Paul Adams in Music City Wrestling. But he took a long and unusual route to get where he is today.

Though he's gone through a few identity crises, Frenchy Riviera is coming into his own. This big (and we do mean big!) man is poised to break away from the independent scene and take his place in the national spotlight

arena. So I do."

On September 25, 1992, Frenchy made his pro debut—as Big Bubba Humphrey.

"I was billed as the grandson of Happy Humphrey," Frenchy explains, "and even though that's not the case, it was fine with Happy and fine with me. I felt it was an honor for me and a tribute to the wrestler I loved for so many years."

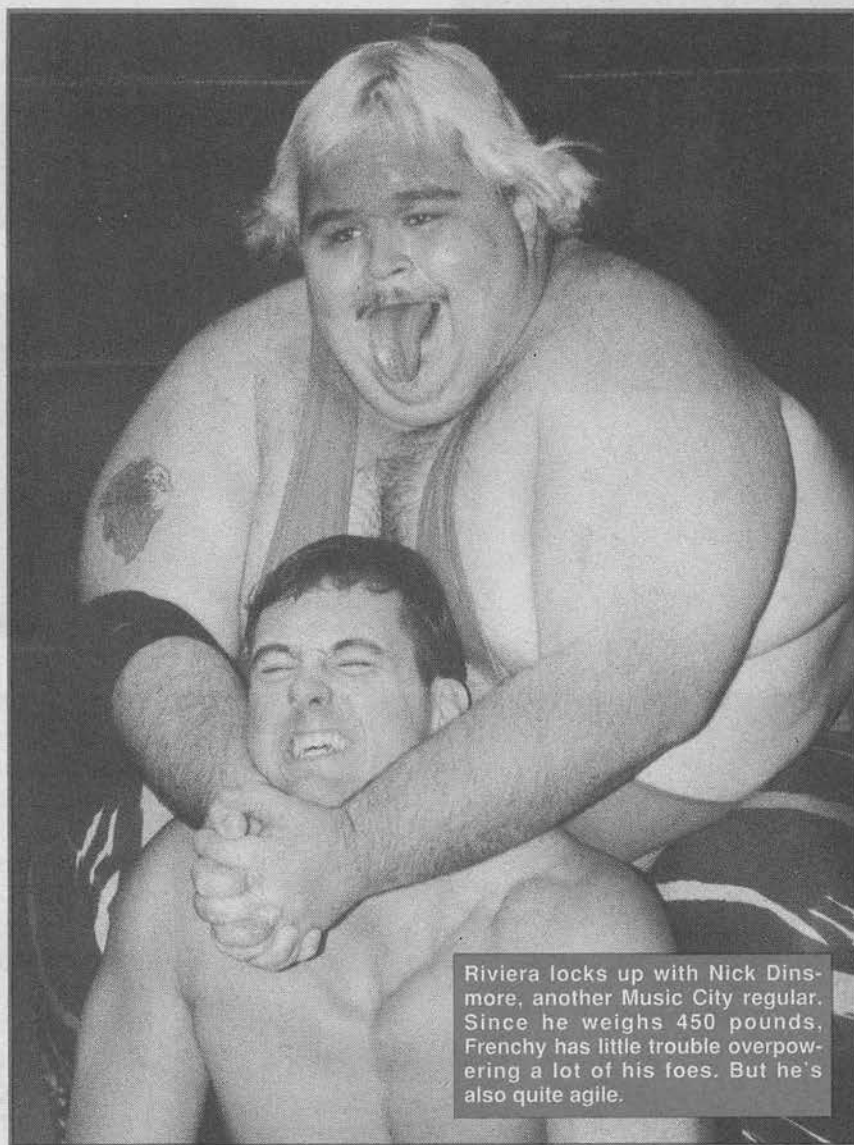
Frenchy lost that debut match to "Bulldog" Greg Sawyer when Sawyer's manager, Mad Jack, threw powder in his eyes. But Humphrey—at ringside in his wheelchair—simply smiled and offered his "grandson" another piece of advice: "Every time it seems bleak, there's a light around the corner."

The light started growing brighter as Frenchy began honing his skills in several Southern independents, including 'Bama Championship Wrestling, All-State Championship Wrestling.

Before long, Frenchy dropped the Big Bubba Humphrey moniker and began wrestling under the name Keith Arden.

"That happened for a bunch of reasons," Frenchy explains. "My brother Kenny had trained me, of course, but it was more than that. I wanted to shed the reference to Humphrey, as much as I loved him. I wanted to start establishing my own presence, on my own terms, with my own name."

Precisely one year after Keith made his debut, his younger brother, John, made *his* pro debut, in the North American Wrestling Alliance. The NAWA tag team title became the property of the Ardens, with all three sharing the championship. They ruled the NAWA, in large part (no pun intended) due to the impressive "Cuddly Crunch," an incredible maneuver in which Kenny would bulldog 450 pounds of Keith onto a hapless and helpless opponent. The trio, now flush with independent success, fell under the man-



agement of Paul Adams and moved on to North American All-Star Wrestling (which evolved into today's Music City Wrestling) in early-1997.

By this time, Keith was ready to move on again.

"I made a mistake, I admit," he says. "I wanted to establish myself on my own terms, and I did—a bit—but I had to share myself with Kenny and John. I didn't want to do that anymore."

Hence the name Frenchy Riviera.

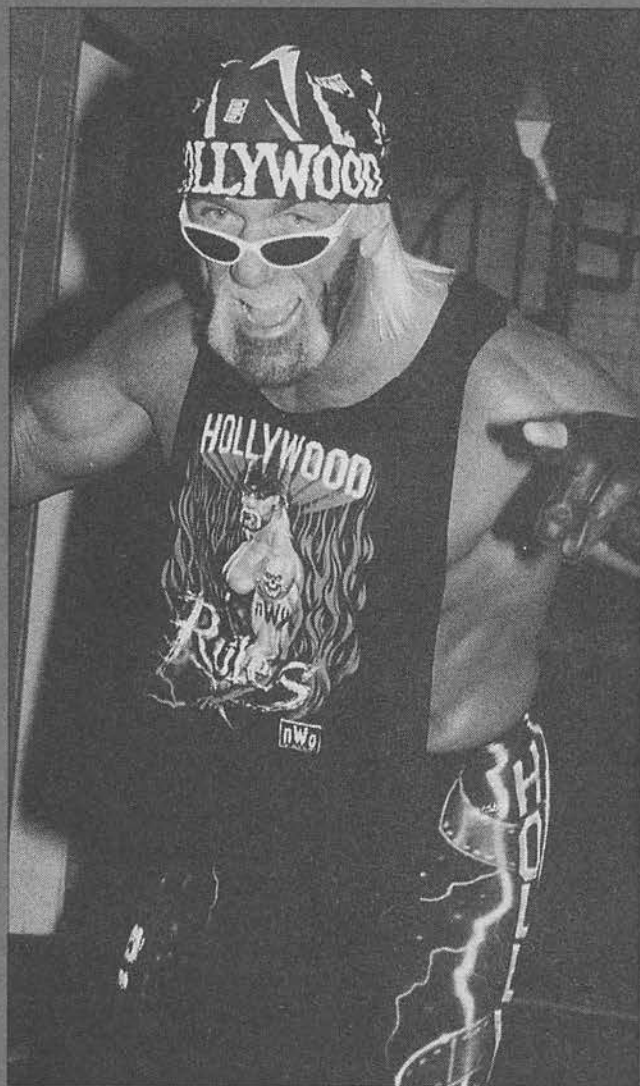
Those who have seen Riviera wrestle most often compare him to Dusty Rhodes, though nobody who ever saw Rhodes wrestle came away with stories of "the American Dream" using his body

the way Riviera does—with moon-saults and his unique and devastatingly effective "French Kiss" splash!

"That splash is gonna be my ticket to the WWF or WCW," Frenchy says. "I'm seasoned, I'm primed, and I'm ready to make the move. Terry Golden's Southern title? Yeah, that's next on my list. But I'm looking to be in a major pay-per-view event before the odometer runs over into the year 2000. That's how I'll know I've really made it."

In the meantime, Frenchy doesn't quite care who he squashes or splashes on his way to international prominence. That's bad news for everyone on the independent scene. □

HULK HOGAN



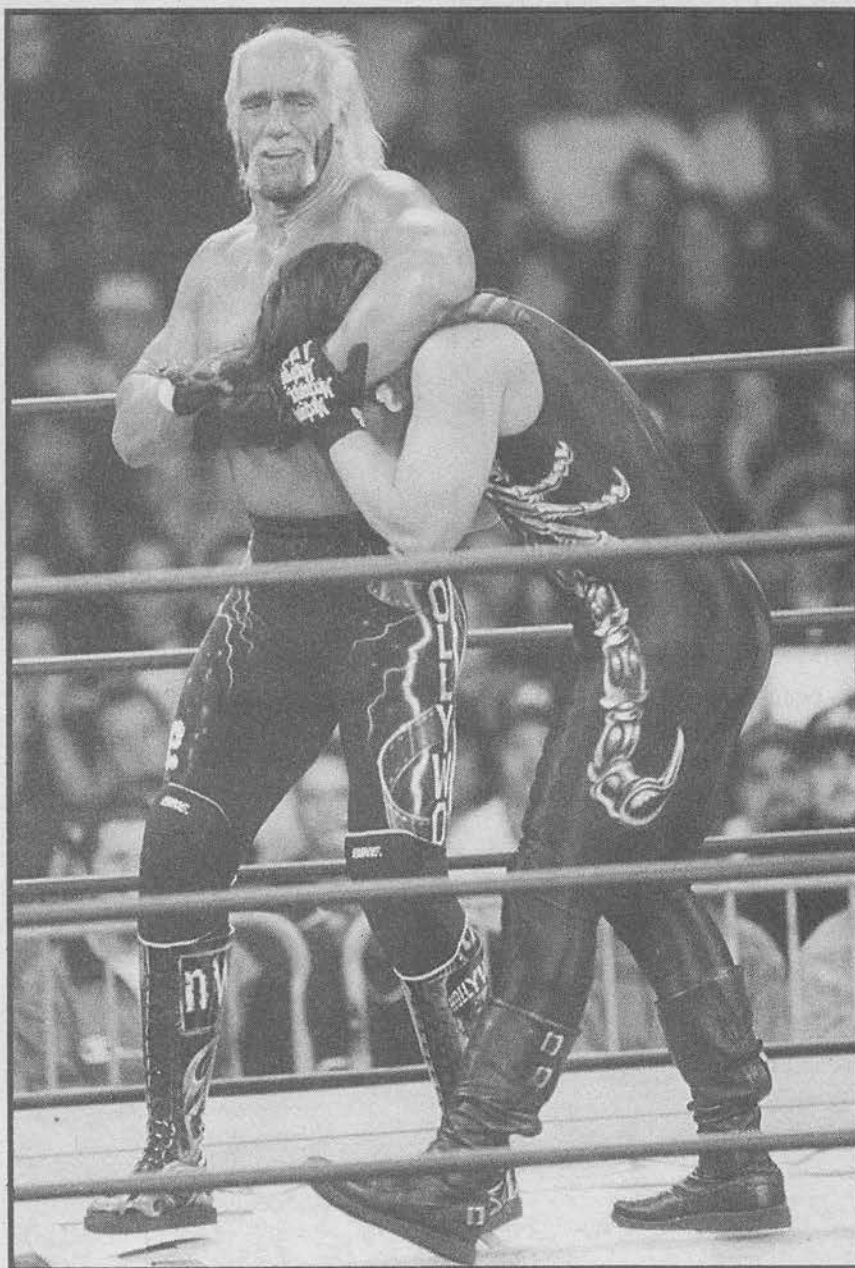
LET'S FACE FACTS: The NWO has tried to take over WCW by breaking rules, interfering in matches, attacking enemies, and even manufacturing its own tag team championship belts. But on December 28, 1997, at Starrcade, the NWO was done wrong. More specifically, then-WCW World champ Hulk Hogan was done wrong.

Hogan defended the title against Sting in one of the most anticipated matches in history. A sell-out crowd at the MCI Center in Washington, D.C., focused on every move and was stunned when Sting, the people's choice, took a boot to the face, then was legdropped for the pin. Referee Nick Patrick made the three-count and Hogan appeared to have retained the belt.

But not so fast. Patrick signalled for the timekeeper to ring the bell, but Bret Hart, who had refereed the previous match between Larry Zbyszko and Eric Bischoff, refused to let him do so. According to Hart, Patrick had made a fast three-count, so Bret kayoed the former NWO referee, collared Hogan, threw him back into the ring, and ordered the match restarted. Sting went on to win the World title by submission.

Hogan was outraged. The next night on **Nitro**, he received a rematch against Sting ... and lost again by submission. The match was marred by interference by NWO and WCW wrestlers, and J.J. Dillon, chairman of the WCW Executive Committee, was called upon to render a decision. Ten days later at the premiere of **WCW Thunder**, Dillon shocked the wrestling world by announcing the title would be held up.

Senior Editor Bill Apter spoke with Hulk Hogan a few days after the **Thunder** card. "He was still angry," Apter reported. "I guess he had a right to be."



Hulk Hogan wears down Sting with a headlock. Hogan, knowing Sting hadn't wrestled regularly in 15 months, decided to target Sting's questionable stamina at Starrcade. It worked. Hogan seemed to pin Sting cleanly, only to have Bret Hart restart the match.

Q: Let's start out by talking about the WCW World title controversy ...

A: Yeah, Bill, let's start out by talking about the NWO World title controversy. What's on your mind?

Q: Well, that was going to be my question. What's on your mind?

A: You tell me. What should be on my mind?

Q: Obviously, you were robbed. You cleanly pinned Sting at Starrcade, and Bret Hart was wrong to inter-

fere and continue the match. Now you go on. Let's have your version.

A: My version? My version isn't my version. It's the version of anyone with two eyes and any common sense. The only people who saw that match as a Sting victory were the WCW apologists, and even they came around after a while.

Q: You're talking about J.J. Dillon.

A: No, I'm not talking about J.J.

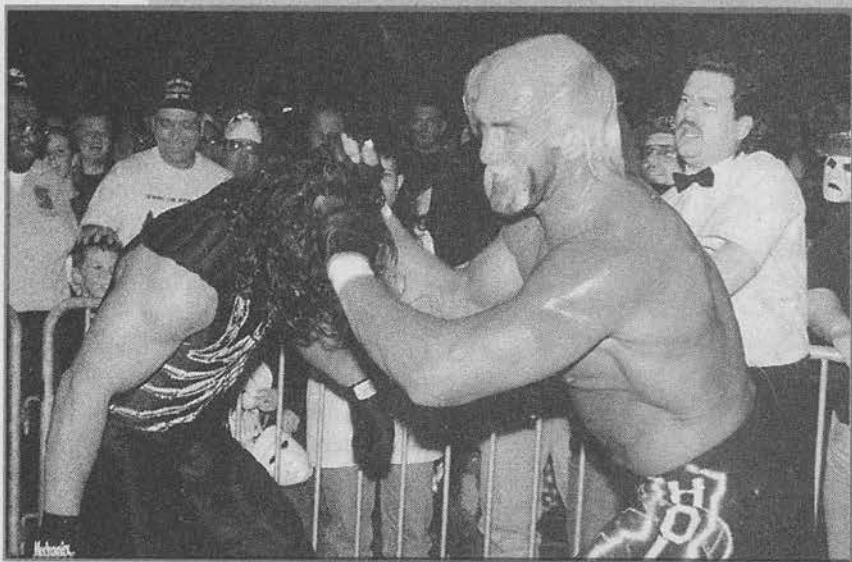
Dillon, because that idiot never came to his senses. Title held up? What's that all about? Why should the title have been held up, brother, when the NWO World champion cleanly pinned the challenger, one-two-three, in the center of the ring, with no controversy, no outside interference, no nothing. Let me tell you something, Apter, for the past two years, all I've heard is tons of crap about how the NWO interferes and the NWO cheats and this garbage and that garbage. Well, the NWO stands up for its rights, and the NWO stands up for each other, brother, but in this case, there was no reason to stand up for anything, because "Hollywood" Hogan cleanly pinned Sting, one-two-three, with no controversy. But then Bret Hart had to stick his nose where it didn't belong and Dillon let it happen.

Q: Well, not exactly. Dillon held up the title.

A: Big deal! You know what that means? When you get right down to it, that means that Dillon took something from me, "Hollywood" Hogan, and gave it to Sting, when Sting didn't deserve anything. I won that match. He lost. Dillon decided there was too much controversy, and even worse, he took the title away from me. You tell me who got the worst of that deal, Apter.

Q: I guess you did.

A: You guess? What are you guessing? You *know*. Everybody knows. Even that sniveling coward Sting knows. He got something for nothing, and then he still complained, telling Dillon he has no guts, then telling me I'm a dead man. Well, Sting, brother, bring it on. Come after me. If I'm such a dead man, then how come you were the one taking that big foot to the face? Then how come you were the one feeling the power of the "Hollywood" Hogan legdrop, then getting humiliated in front



Hogan knew he had the advantage whenever he fought Sting outside the ring. That was a good way to keep Sting grounded. In the ring, Sting dominated with his special blend of power and speed.

of all your fans? I won that match. There's no way it should've been allowed to continue. Where'd Hart come from? What was he doing out there? I was done wrong, Apter, and you know it.

Q: But how about the rematch?

A: The rematch? What does that have to do with anything? In the rematch, Sting walked into the ring with the belt around his waist and I walked into the ring with nothing. Rematch? There shouldn't have been a rematch, because there shouldn't have been a controversy. And did you hear those morons Schiavone and Dusty Rhodes acting like Nick Patrick cheated or something? What match were they watching?

Q: Back to the rematch ...

A: Yeah, sure. The rematch that never should've happened. The rematch that wasn't. The rematch that by some J.J. Dillon slight of hand had the wrong man wearing the belt and the wrong man as challenger. Even then, when the odds were against me, I pinned Sting for the three-count a second time.

Q: But you had a handful of trunks that time, Hulk. The count was made by Nick Patrick, who had

been suspended by Dillon. He wasn't a sanctioned referee, and he had no right to be in the ring. And the count did seem a little

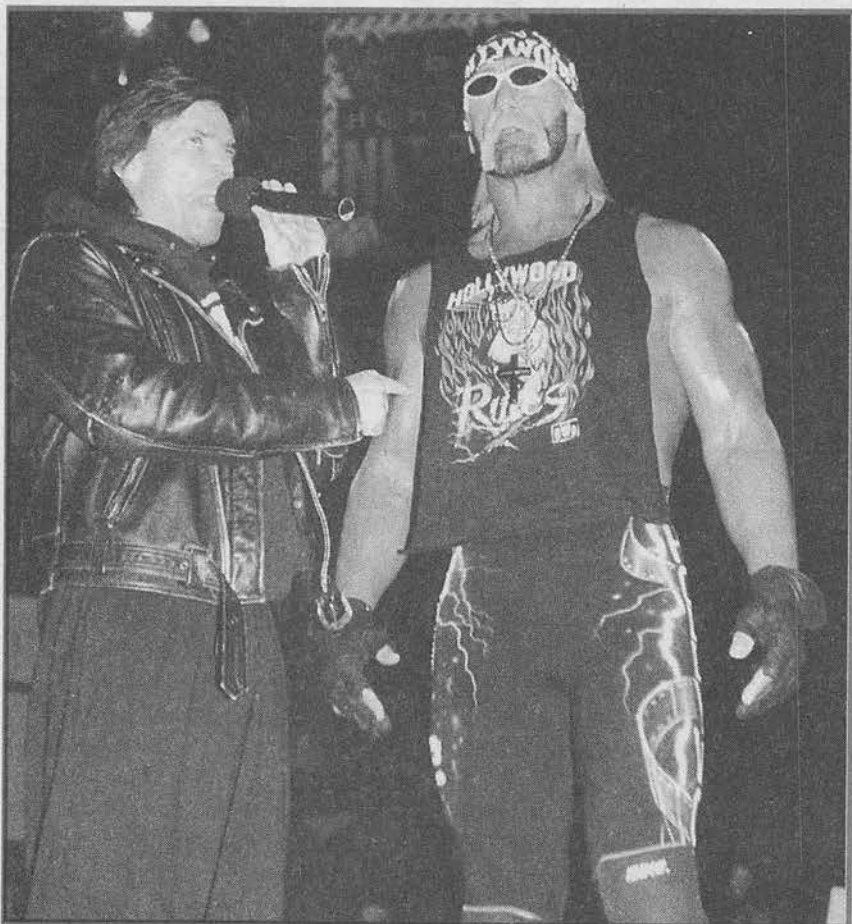
fast. I agree that you were robbed at Starrcade, but I'm not so sure about the rematch.

A: No, you're wrong. If I had the belt going into the match, like I was supposed to, there's no way Sting would've walked away with it. I can't believe this! I beat the same guy two nights in a row and WCW ends up with the title anyway. That's justice?

Q: When Dillon came out at *Thunder*, were you expecting him to give you the belt back?

A: I don't know what to expect anymore, especially where Dillon's concerned. Yeah, when he called out Sting with the belt, I figured that maybe he was showing some guts for once, but no way. I was stupid to think that was going to happen. In wrestling these days, everything goes against the NWO ...

Q: Excuse me?



The night after Starrcade, Eric Bischoff claimed Hogan was still the "NWO" World champion. But it's debatable if Hogan agrees with Bischoff when "Easy E" bills himself as the leader of the NWO.

A: There's a conspiracy. There's a conspiracy by WCW to take away what the NWO has rightfully earned and a conspiracy to break us apart ...

Q: Which seems to be working.

A: It's not working.

Q: It sure looks that way. How about you and Savage?

A: How about me and Savage? The "Macho Man" is still tight with the NWO. Lex Luger just got under Randy's skin and he got caught up in the heat of the moment. You can't blame him for wanting to shut Luger up once and for all. "Easy E" just had to take control of the situation. It's hard to control "Macho" when the madness creeps in. That's why we dig him.

Q: There seem to be signs of dissension. Savage and Kevin Nash clearly aren't getting along. Nash said on *Nitro* that Savage wants no part of him, and that same night, Savage was clearly trying to hit your guys with that top-rope axhandle when he nailed Rick Steiner by mistake.

A: Seem. The magic word is seem, Apter, because that's the way it looks to you, but that's not the way it is. Not at all. The NWO is stronger than ever. Any minor problems will be taken care of inside the family. It's all NWO family business.

Q: Then again, at Starrcade, the NWO lost the U.S. belt when "Diamond" Dallas Page beat Curt Hennig.

A: Don't even say the name.

Q: Hennig?

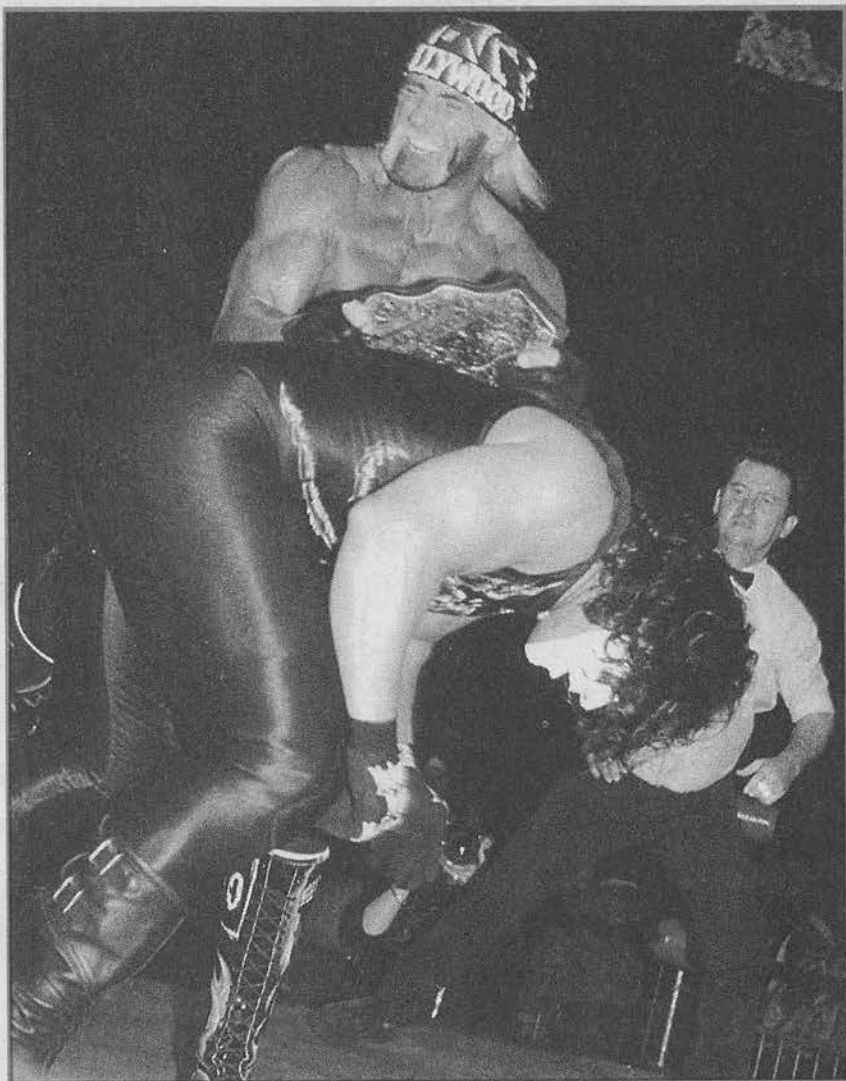
A: No, I mean Page. Don't even say the name. The man got lucky.

Q: And Zbyszko beat Bischoff to hold on to *Nitro*.

A: Right. And who interfered again?

Q: Bret Hart.

A: Right. Bret Hart, the man who was supposed to be the impartial referee. I don't know about you, but I've never seen an impartial referee punching out one of the participants in a match.



Hogan smashed Sting with the WCW World title belt before their *Nitro* rematch. Sting may have underestimated Hogan's determination to regain the gold. "Hollywood" was anxious to spray-paint "N-W-O" on the belt once again.

Q: You've got a point.

A: Yeah, I've got a point, and let me tell you something, brother, because this is what it's all about. This is why the NWO exists in the first place. This is why we're always looking out for each other. Because if we don't look out for each other, who's going to look out for us? An NWO member helps out one of his brothers and you know what that's called? Cheating. That's what they call it. Nick Patrick makes an impartial decision and you know what that's called? A paid-off referee, that's what they call it, as if we had Patrick

in our hip pockets. But a WCW wrestler interferes in a match and you know what they call that? Helping out. Doing the right thing. Standing up to the NWO. And Bret Hart cheats more than Nick Patrick could have ever dreamed of cheating, and you know what that's called? Being brave and courageous. And you know what we have here, brother Bill?

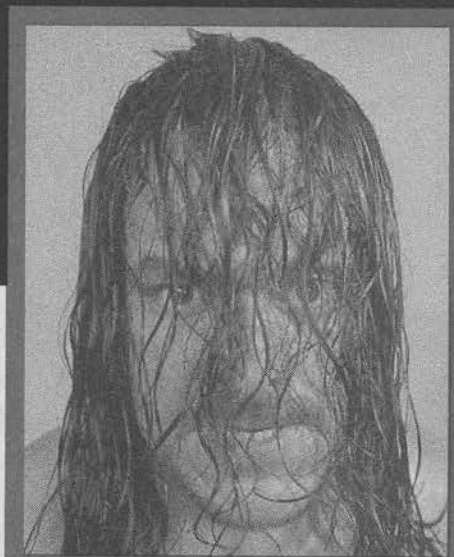
Q: What?

A: A double standard. That's all. And that's why the NWO exists and will continue to exist. Forever. You'd better jump on the bandwagon while you still can. □

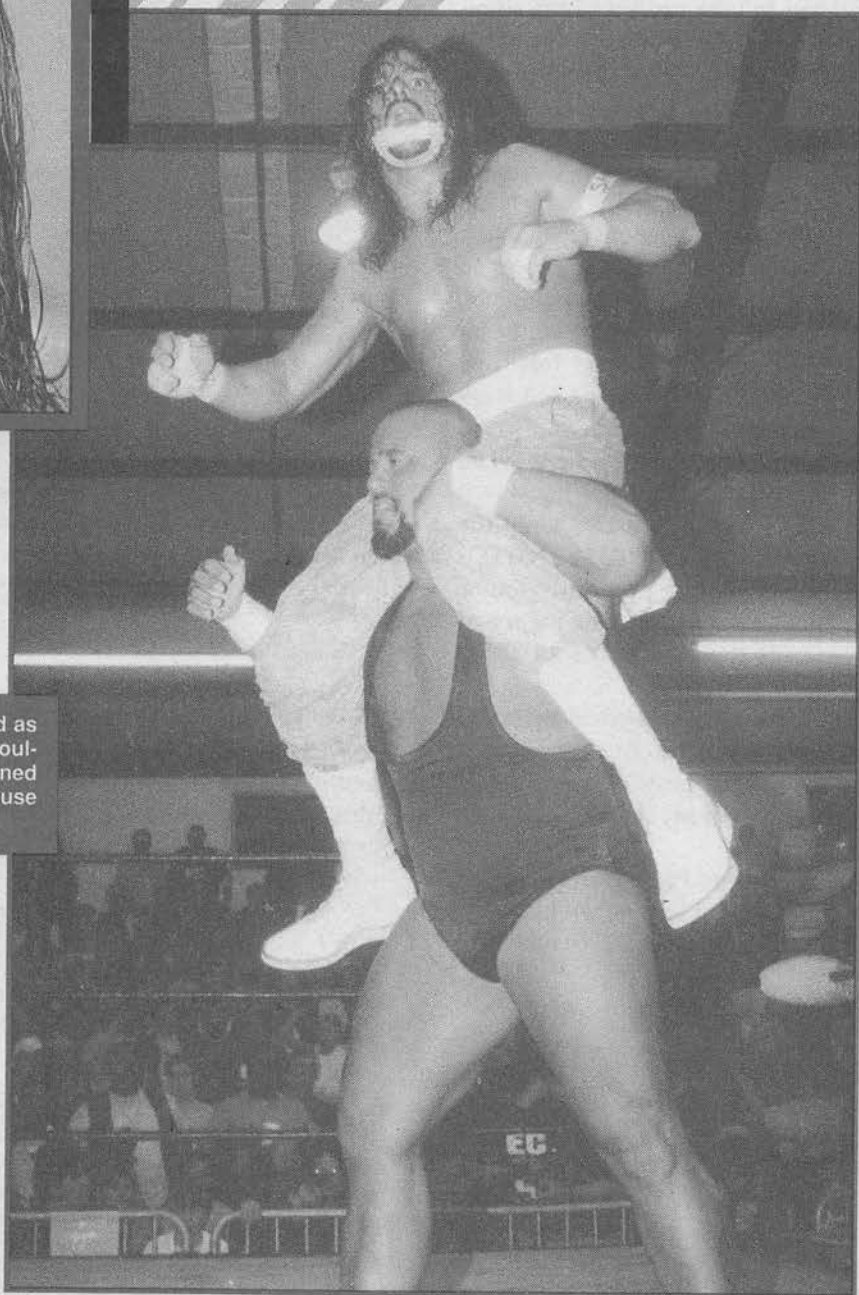
X-Ray

THE WRESTLER PANEL EXAMINES

SABU



Sabu, taped jaw and all, looks concerned as his arch-rival, Taz, lifts him up on his shoulders. Several of our panelists are concerned that Sabu's career will be cut short because his body takes too much punishment.





CAPT. LOU ALBANO

"One of the most intense athletes the Captain has ever seen, brother. He really looks like he wants to hurt his opponent every night. That kind of desire is something special. When I was managing full-time, oh, man, I would have done anything to get hooked up with someone like him. You can't teach the passion he has for what he does. It's just there. I hope everybody out there enjoys watching Sabu and appreciates his dedication. There aren't many like him."

Capt. Lou Albano, "The Guiding Light," has managed 13 different tag teams to a record 17 WWF World tag team titles.



KILLER KOWALSKI

"I'll tell a lot of the guys I work with that you gotta make sacrifices if you're ever gonna make it. Put in those extra hours in the gym, watch a little more tape, wrestle with some pain sometimes. But I've never seen anyone wrestle hurt as much as Sabu. I've watched some ECW shows here in Massachusetts and you can tell by the look on his face how much pain he's in. But he keeps going. He better take some time off to heal or his career will end soon."

Killer Kowalski, one of the most sadistic rule-breakers in the history of the sport, runs a wrestling school in Malden, Massachusetts.



HARLEY RACE

"I admire Sabu for two reasons. First, his dedication to winning is really remarkable. He'll do whatever it takes every single time. Two, he wants to show the fans a great match every time. But what I don't like is that he thinks he has to make every match even more spectacular than the last one he had. If you wrestle smart like I always did, you're careful about when you take risks. Take too many of them and all you're doing is abusing your body unnecessarily."

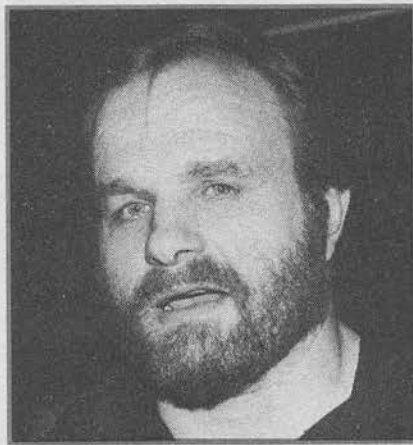
Harley Race, an eight-time NWA World champion, has also managed top stars like Lex Luger and Big Van Vader.



FABULOUS MOOLAH

"I'm amazed that he can keep adding new moves to his repertoire. That Sabu, he did a lot to establish ECW as what it is. I still would like to see him wrestle some of the big stars outside ECW so we could see how he'd do against them, darlin'. Maybe Sabu vs. Sting or Shawn Michaels or Bret or Owen Hart. He's faced a lot of terrific competitors in ECW, but I don't think we can really judge just how good he is until we see him against some of those other guys."

Fabulous Moolah, the finest woman wrestler in history, held the World title for 28 years. She now trains wrestlers in Columbia, South Carolina.



OLE ANDERSON

"I don't understand what Sabu's trying to accomplish in that ECW. I mean, Rob Van Dam wants everybody to believe that he and Sabu belong in the WWF and aren't loyal to ECW, but if that's the case, why haven't they been in the WWF recently? I don't get it. He oughta drop Van Dam and go after a title already. Is there any doubt in anybody's mind about whether he's good enough to beat any of the other wrestlers in ECW, including the champions? There shouldn't be."

Ole Anderson, a five-time former NWA World tag team champion and founding member of The Four Horsemen, has been retired for several years.



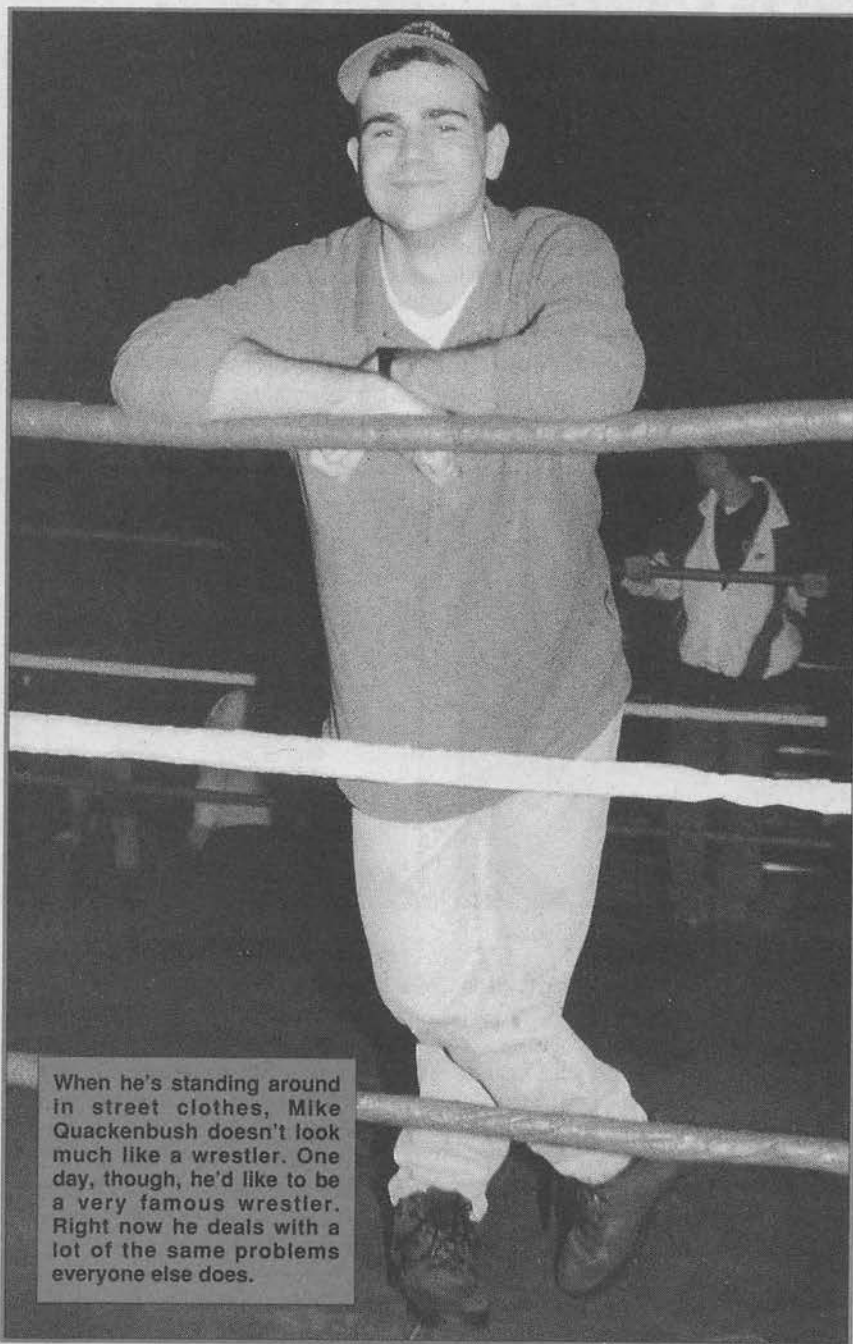
PAUL ORNDORFF

"As far as wrestling what people call that extreme style, I guess I'd have to say there's no one better than Sabu, but I'll tell you this much: If he toned his style down a little and became a better mat and technical wrestler, his career would last a whole lot longer. He's already pretty beaten up, so what's his body going to look like in five years? Even more important, what's it going to feel like? If you ask me, he needs to become a more well-rounded wrestler."

Former WCW TV and World tag team champion Paul Orndorff retired from active competition after suffering a neck injury in December 1995.

From Bëll to Bëll

By Mike Quackenbush



When he's standing around in street clothes, Mike Quackenbush doesn't look much like a wrestler. One day, though, he'd like to be a very famous wrestler. Right now he deals with a lot of the same problems everyone else does.

Editor's note: In this new bi-monthly column, THE WRESTLER gives you a glimpse of the sport through the eyes of an actual wrestler. Twenty-one-year-old Mike Quackenbush is not an international superstar—far from it. He's a 6'1", 191-pounder from West Lawn, Pennsylvania, who dreams of someday making it big. Like hundreds of other up-and-coming grapplers, Mike wrestles as often as he can but needs to hold a day job to supplement his income. In this, his first column, Mike introduces himself and explains just what the sport means to him.

WRESTLING IS A funny thing. It can be your hobby, it can be your entertainment, and it can be your life. Sometimes it's all of those things, and other times it's the last thing on earth you want to see, hear about, or think about.

I've seen great things in wrestling, and I've experienced great things through wrestling. There is no greater egotistical moment than when you raise your arms after a dynamic performance and an arena full of people you don't know begin chanting your name.

On the other hand, wrestling has at different times cost me both my best friend and a woman for whom I cared very much. And that left a particularly bitter taste for wrestling in my mouth. There is nothing so disheartening to a performer than when he delivers a dynamic performance and nobody cares, nobody applauds, and nobody is even paying attention. Wrestling can break your heart.

Wrestling can teach you a lot about yourself. You discover that often times the person you are in the ring is not at all the person you really are. It's like having a secret identity. There's a real Jekyll and Hyde feel to it, to just switch back and forth. Frequently, it feels like you are less of a person and more of a character. Some wrestlers eventually become the person they are in the ring. In this fashion, however, you begin to discover the qualities and characteristics that you possess ... and the ones you wish you possessed.

There's nothing "Lightning" about me when I wake up in the morning. I'm just plain ol' Mike at 7 a.m. There is a wonderful dichotomy to it all. At the end of the day, I take off the starched shirt and tacky tie that go with my 9-to-5 job and slip into the singlet and kneepads that fit the dress code for the mat wars. Somewhere in between my daily duties at the office and my nightly outings in the ring, I try to remember to eat.

There are long, tiring days when I can't wait to pack the duffel bag and head out to the gym to wrestle with the other guys. There are long, painful nights when I can't wait to be sitting comfortably at my desk, chatting with my co-workers. To some, I guess, it's very unusual. But to me, it seems very ordinary.

As I said, I have a job. I iron my own clothes. I drive a Hyundai. What could be more typical than that?

I could try to tell you that I'm some big wrestling superstar and that people know me everywhere I go, but that's not the truth. I have to pay the bills, just like everyone else. And I have to pay my dues in the world of wrestling, just like every other athlete on the independent circuit who aspires to make a name for himself and one day make it into the bigger leagues.

Sometimes I feel like people put a label on me from the first second they hear about what I do. "That guy's a professional wrestler." "Oh, Mike does that WWF stuff like ya see on TV. Y'know, like Hulk Hogan." I hear it all the time. Never mind the inherent narrow-mindedness of it all; it happens just the same. Some people want to



Quackenbush battles Joe Rules during a Pennsylvania Championship Wrestling card. Hearing the cheers of the fans can be a great thrill for Mike, but there are times when he doesn't even want to think about wrestling.

treat me like a leper, and God knows I use plenty of deodorant, so that's not the problem. Certain kinds of people have a real, genuine prejudice toward pro wrestling in general, and the wrestling stereotype is one of the most enduring with which you could ever be saddled.

I know it's no different for the fans. That's one of the hardest things to deal with. Because there's a time when I have to get out of the ring, take off the gear, and go back to being a regular guy. Whether I like it or not.

But that's only one facet of it; it's not all like that, not by any means. There's that great feeling you get when you come charging down the aisle, and

it's your music that's blaring, and it's your name they're screaming. There's a sense of camaraderie in the locker room that is so easy-going—it's like you've just sat down with a bunch of guys you've known for 20 years. There's nothing that can top the feeling when some cute country babe from the backwoods of Mojimbo wants her picture taken with you, or when her brother knows your finishing move by name and asks for your autograph and a high-five.

Like everything else, it's a two-sided coin. And as hard as it may be to do, there's a tremendous amount of satisfaction to be found in balancing the two sides of that coin. □

Spotlight N...

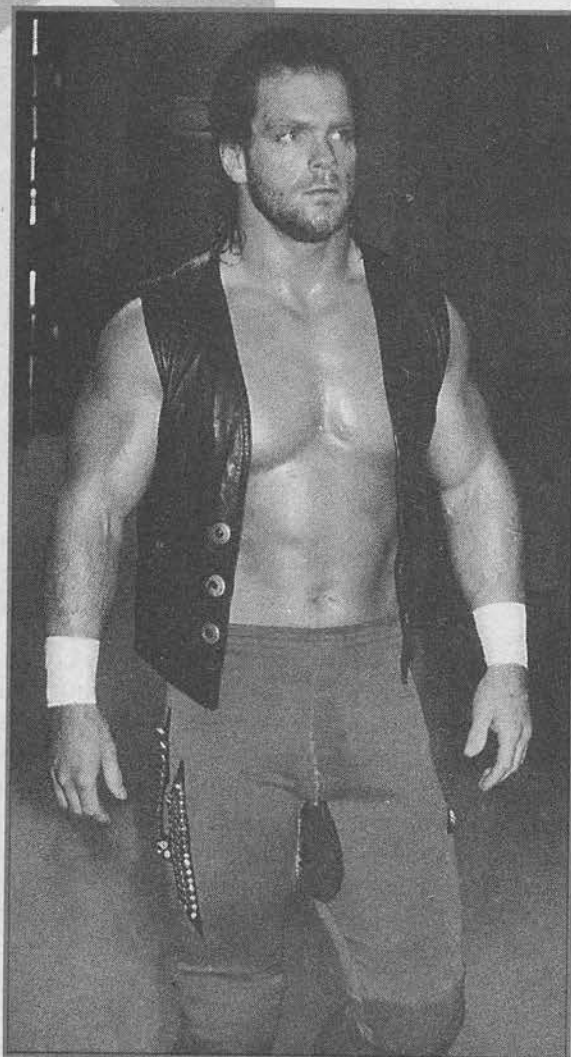
CHRIS BENOIT

FEW WRESTLERS CAN strike the perfect blend of scientific skill and brawling ability like Chris Benoit. Even at just 5'10" and 218 pounds, he is one of the most complete athletes in the sport today.

Unlike many wrestlers out there, Benoit has the pedigree to back up this claim. The Edmonton native was trained by Stu Hart, legendary father of Bret and Owen Hart, before he made his professional debut in 1986.

Most of his early career was spent in Canada and Japan, where he occasionally wrestled as the masked Pegasus Kid. Benoit defeated Jushin Liger for the IWGP junior heavyweight championship in 1990, but he lost a mask vs. mask match to Liger before entering WCW in 1993. His impact in the States turned out to be minimal, so Benoit returned to Japan.

The year 1994 was a successful one for Benoit, who won two major tournaments in the Orient by defeating men such as El Samurai and The Great Sasuke. But his biggest break came when he signed with ECW. The violent nature of ECW competition taught Benoit how to inflict and absorb punishment. He earned the nickname



"Canadian Crippler" by breaking three vertebrae in Sabu's neck.

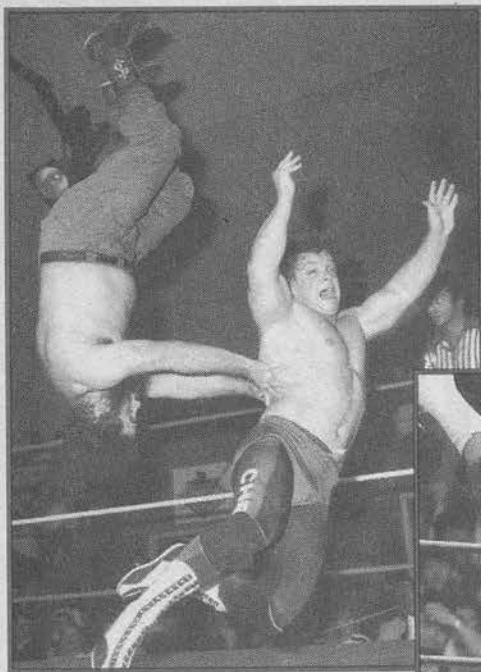
Benoit's greatest success came in tag team action, as he and Dean

Malenko beat Taz and Sabu to become ECW tag team champs on February 25, 1995. After he and Malenko dropped the belts to Public Enemy in April, Benoit flirted with the WWF—even appearing alongside Ted DiBiase at a Raw taping—but eventually resurfaced in WCW, where he joined The Four Horsemen.

At first, his cohorts were Ric Flair, Arn Anderson, and Brian Pillman. Then, shortly after the Horsemen replaced Pillman with Steve "Mongo" McMichael, Benoit ignited an intense, drawn-out feud with Kevin Sullivan. He even taunted Sullivan by appearing with Sullivan's "significant other," Woman, wherever he went. He beat Sullivan in a retirement match at this summer's Bash at the Beach.

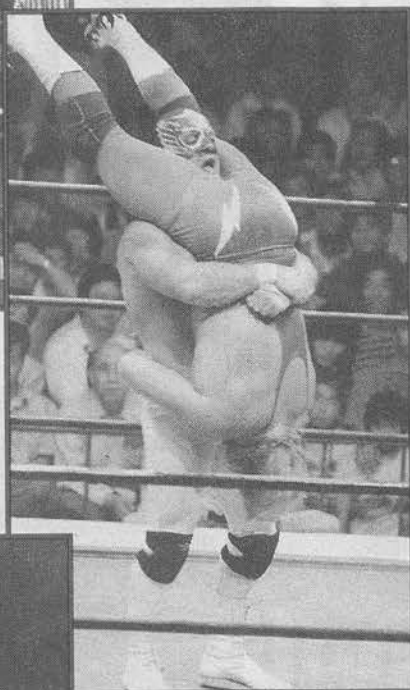
Recently, Raven has targeted Benoit for destruction. Raven may genuinely dislike Benoit, or this could just be his strange way of trying to lure him into his Flock. Meanwhile, Benoit has faced and defeated just about every member of the group, though Raven has been hesitant to face him one-on-one.

We, too, have targeted Chris Benoit; he is the subject of this month's "Spotlight" feature.

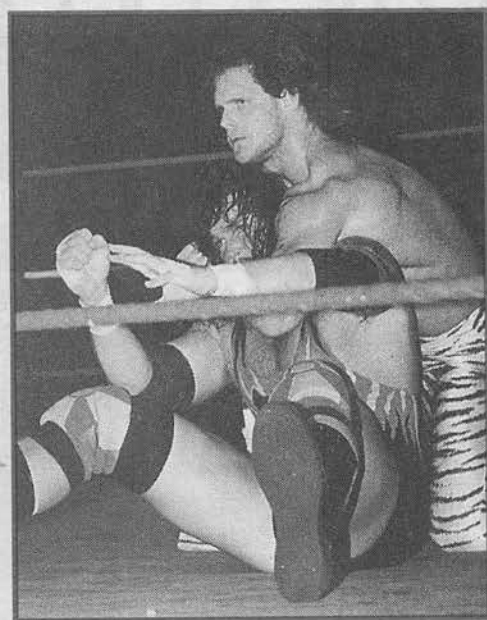
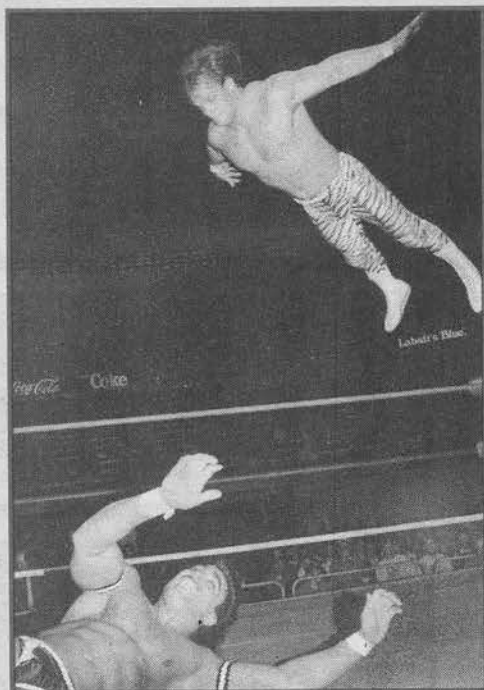


April 1993: One staple of Benoit's vast wrestling repertoire is the flying headbutt. Benoit possesses that rare combination of technical ability and knockdown, drag-out toughness.

February 1988: Benoit (shown flipping The Cuban Assassin) spent much of his early career in Calgary, where he was trained by Stu Hart and contended for the Stampede North American title.



July 1990: The Pegasus Kid piledrives Owen Hart in Japan. Benoit (as Kid) captured the IWGP junior heavyweight title from Jushin Liger in 1990, but he didn't become a star in the U.S. until later.



June 1995: Have tights, will travel. Benoit briefly appeared in the WWF before he returned to WCW and battled men such as Adam Bomb, who's now known as Wrath in WCW.

February 1994: Benoit's bitter feud with Sabu in ECW was so violent that he ended up breaking the Bombay native's neck. Benoit's ferocity thus earned him the nickname "Canadian Crippler."

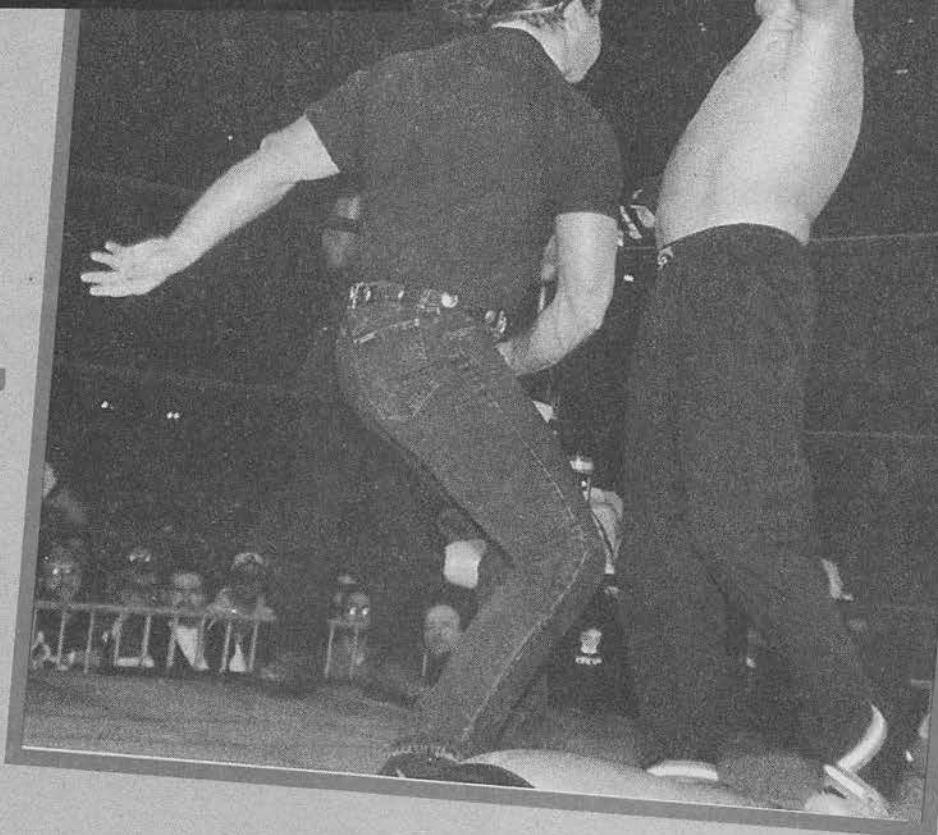


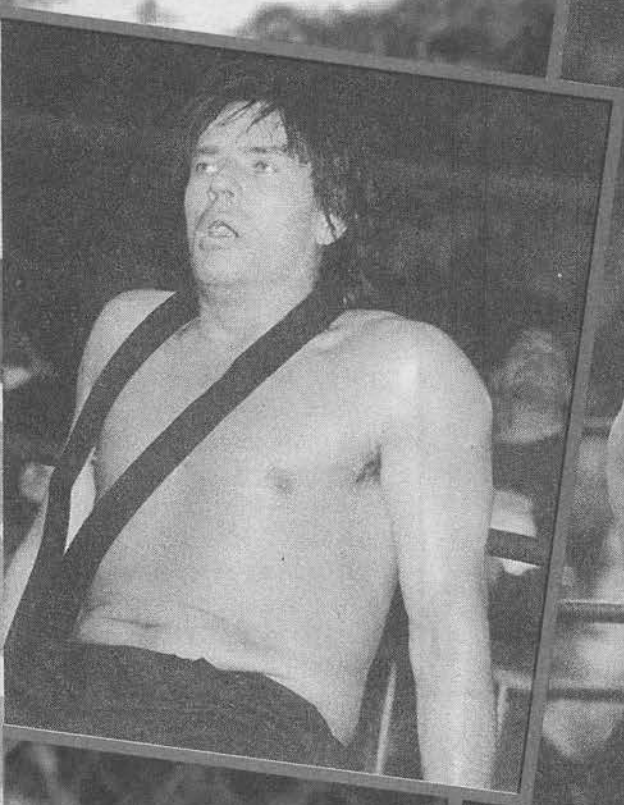
December 1997: Benoit has been at war with Raven's Flock for a few months now. One by one, he has defeated nearly every member. Here he delivers a chop to the chest of Scotty Riggs.

MERCY KILLING IN LARRYLAND!

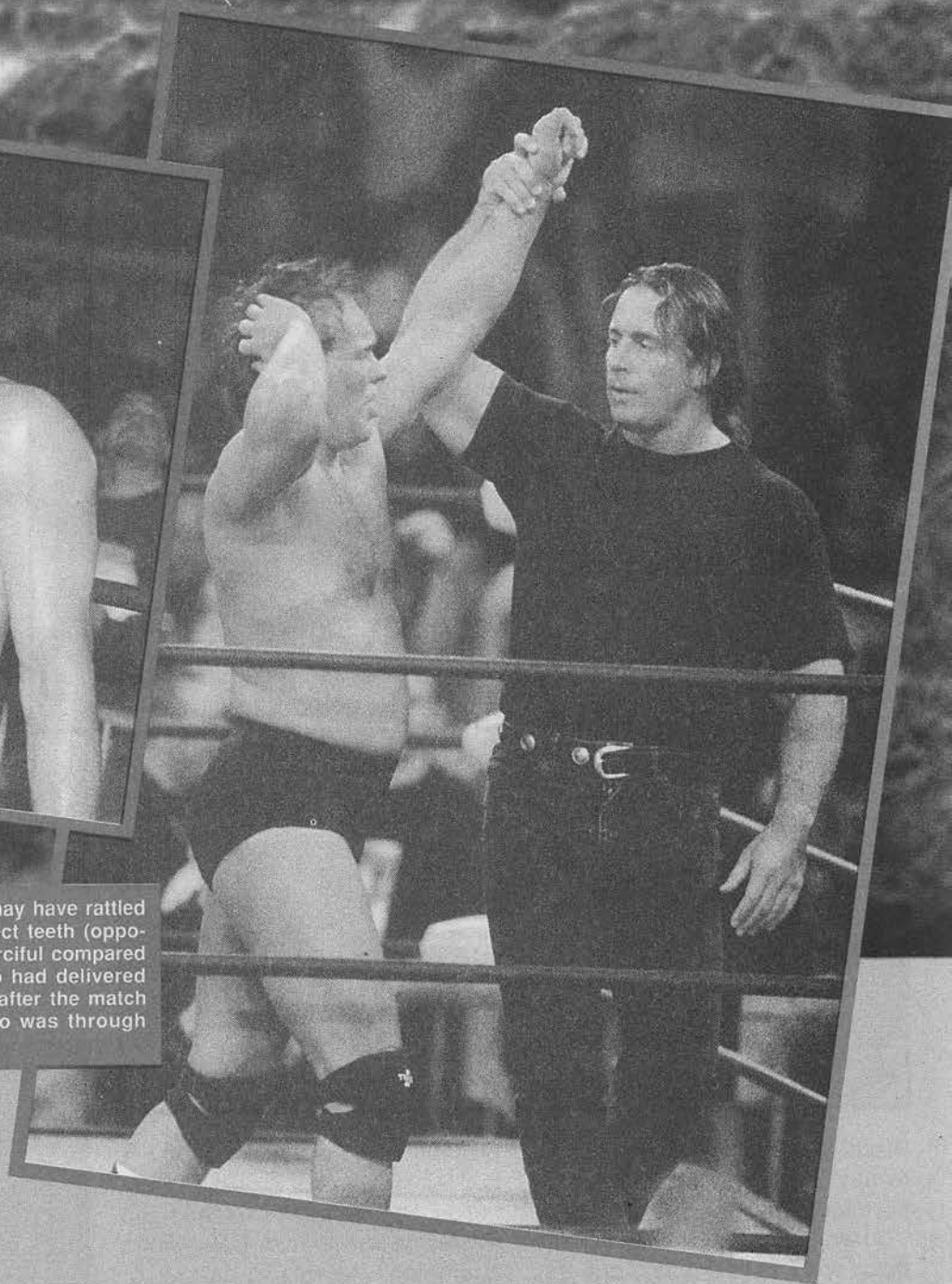
How Bret's Kayo Saved Bischoff!

That shot you heard around the world on December 28 was the sound of Bret Hart decking Eric Bischoff. It followed a savage beating by Larry Zbyszko. On that night, Hart displayed a newfound loyalty to his newfound home ... and a little mercy for his newfound enemy





Bret Hart's knockout punch may have rattled a few of Eric Bischoff's perfect teeth (opposite page, left), but it was merciful compared to the beating Larry Zbyszko had delivered earlier. Bischoff was groggy after the match (above), but at least Zbyszko was through with him (right).



By Steve Anderson

"THIS IS GOING to hurt me more than it will hurt you."

What parent has not said that when disciplining the kids? As Bret Hart served as special referee at Starrcade '97 for the showdown between Larry Zbyszko and Eric Bischoff, he may not have had that

adage in mind. But it applies nonetheless.

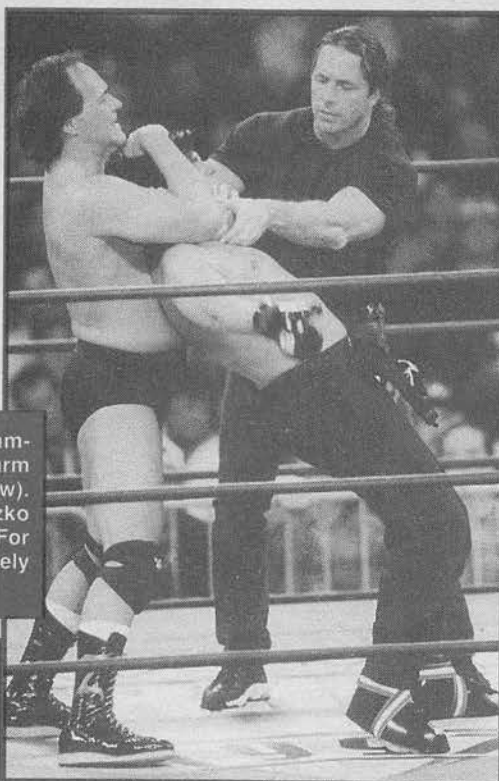
When Hart's fist connected with Bischoff's chin at the end of the bout, the New World Order lost a major battle in its war with WCW by letting *Monday Nitro* slip from within its grasp. And as Bischoff lay prone with a victorious Zbyszko standing over him, the leader of the NWO owed one per-

son a huge debt of gratitude: Bret Hart.

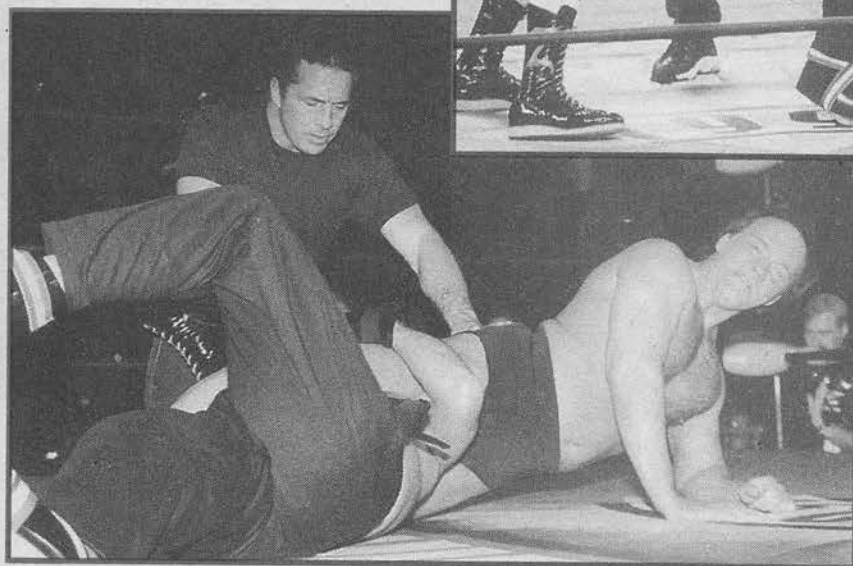
In the prematch hype before the bout, Bischoff was in classic form. His rhetoric and bravado knew no bounds. He promised the rest of the NWO—and wrestling fans everywhere—an easy win. He predicted that his martial arts prowess would be too much for what he perceived to be the deteriorating

skills of his opponent.

Zbyszko, while verbose during his career, let his actions in the ring speak for him. Although he now favors a golf putter over a piledriver, the "Living Legend" wrestled like the smart and seasoned veteran that he is at Starrcade. Bischoff tried to gain an advantage over the color commentator, but to little avail. Zbyszko dismantled every bit of



Bischoff goes from Larryland to "dreamland," but Hart—fearing Zbyszko's forearm may be too low—breaks the hold (below). Hart had a similar concern when Zbyszko used a headscissors on Bischoff (right). For a while, it seemed as if Hart was genuinely worried about Bischoff's personal safety.



Bischoff's arsenal. "Easy E" was, to say the least, outmatched by his more experienced counterpart.

"I was never looking for the quick win," Zbyszko said one day after the bout. "I wanted that punk Bischoff to feel the pain that WCW has felt over the past 18 months. And that's a lot of pain. I was ready and willing to draw him out."

Does that mean he did not appreciate Hart's interference?

"I'm not saying that," responded Zbyszko with a smirk. "I'm all for seeing *anybody* in WCW take a shot at Bischoff. But I guess he did get off a little easy."

Toward the end of the match,

Bischoff was worn and weary. He had felt the brunt of Zbyszko's frustration. He had been stretched and twisted by the former AWA World champion. He was in danger of becoming disabled, or even worse.

"That's bull," said Bischoff. "Play the tape. I knew *exactly* what I was doing in that match. I was playing a classic defensive strategy. I was lulling Zbyszko into a false sense of security and was ready to pounce. If it weren't for Hart, I would have prevailed."

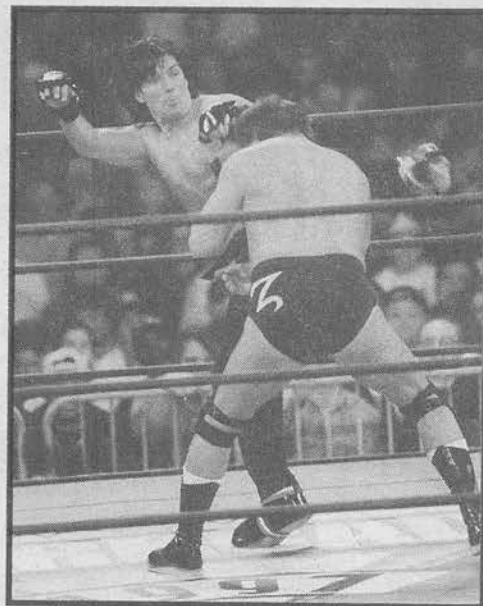
Ironically, Hart's assistance was probably not necessary. Even though Scott Hall helped his boss by planting a steel plate in Bischoff's boot, and Bischoff's subse-

quent kick connected (although after the steel plate had taken flight), Zbyszko was only momentarily stunned. Bischoff's lighter frame would have hardly provided the weight necessary for the three-count.

The fact is, barring NWO interference, Zbyszko would have continued to toy with Bischoff the way a child plays around with an action figure. For the "Living Legend," this bout was about more than control of a TV show or a future bout with Hall—this was about his dignity. A loss to an arrogant renegade executive might have tarnished the Zbyszko legacy forever.

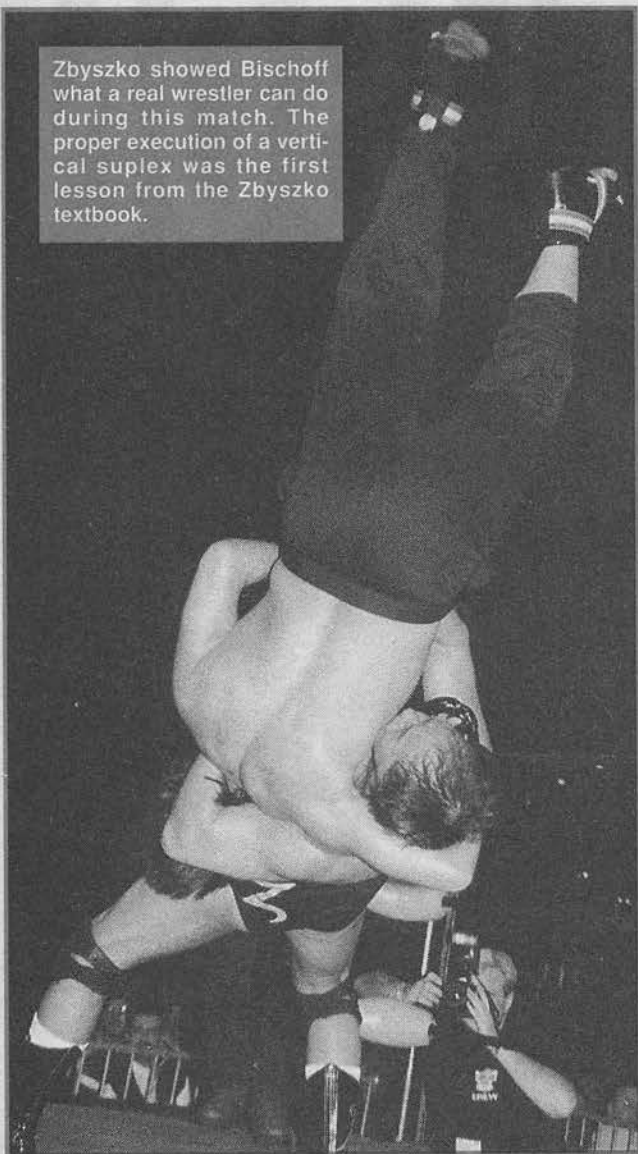
"Bischoff kept shooting off his mouth about me being too old and washed up," lamented Zbyszko. "I was not only ready to go the distance, but I wanted him to know that I was able to destroy him physically, mentally, and emotionally."

When Bischoff's "enhanced" boot knocked down Zbyszko, Hart found his opening. His character

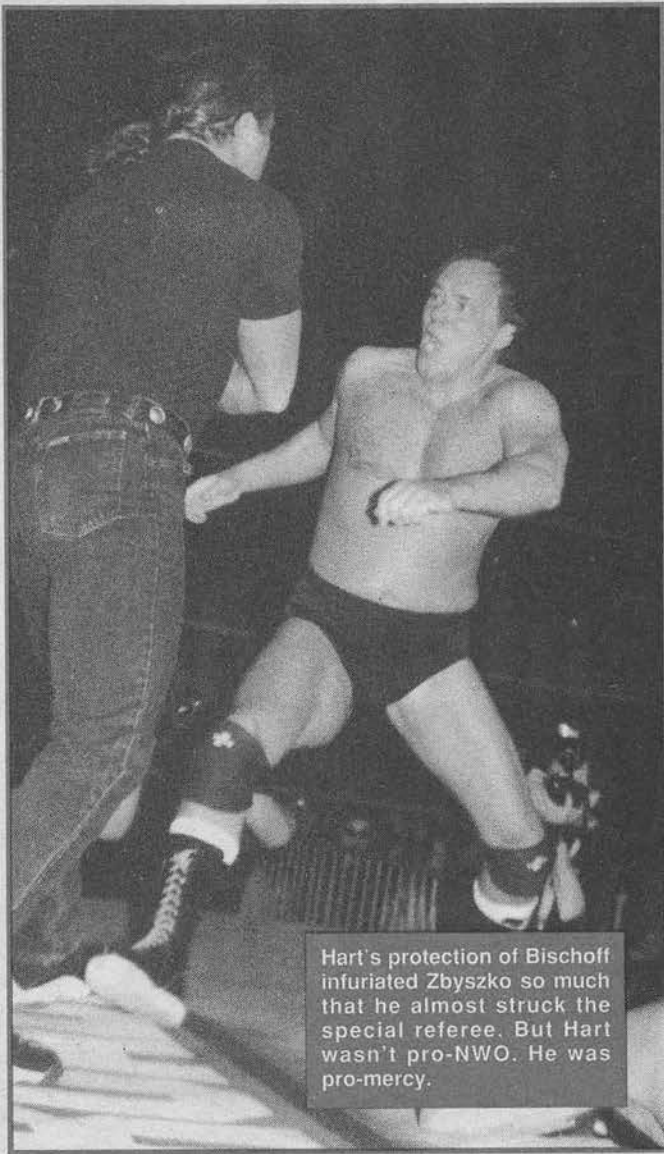


Bischoff surprises Zbyszko with a kick to the head. Hart must have seen the piece of metal that flew out of his boot. His kayo came seconds later.

Zbyszko showed Bischoff what a real wrestler can do during this match. The proper execution of a vertical suplex was the first lesson from the Zbyszko textbook.



Hart's protection of Bischoff infuriated Zbyszko so much that he almost struck the special referee. But Hart wasn't pro-NWO. He was pro-mercy.



had been questioned since he entered the promotion. Would he ally himself with WCW or the NWO? With five fingers clenched into a fist, he made his intentions crystal-clear. He was siding with tradition. A tradition that was established with wrestlers like Larry Zbyszko.

"The NWO is like a lot of the garbage I left behind," said Hart. "They could offer me all the money in the world, but I refuse to lower myself into their slimy pit."

But did he feel like he did Bischoff a favor? Was he being inadvertently merciful to his newfound enemy?

"Frankly, it never entered my mind," responded Hart. "I must

admit that I was enjoying what Zbyszko was doing to that creep. I don't think I wanted it to end. Now that I think about it, though, I guess what I did for Bischoff's own good."

Kind of like a parent disciplining a child. He doesn't like to do it, but he hopes the child will learn a lesson in the process.

Frustration over the previous few weeks had reached the boiling point for the "Hitman." More than anything, Hart sought respect. With that one action, Hart gained respect from everyone in WCW, but gained the wrath of its rival.

Back in the WWF in November, a punch started a lot of problems for him. In WCW, one punch ended a few.

"People call me a turncoat and a traitor," said Bischoff. "But I gave Bret Hart the moon and the stars. That jerk showed that he'd rather play for a losing team. That's what Bret Hart is—a loser."

While Starrcade may have been an event to forget for the NWO (the group also lost the World and U.S. belts), remember, Bischoff and company have shown plenty of resiliency in the past. Although scarred from his battle with the "Legend," Bischoff is still strutting—perhaps with a slight limp—around WCW arenas, promising better days for the NWO.

He has Bret Hart to thank for that. □

MIKE TYSON

Has He

Entered

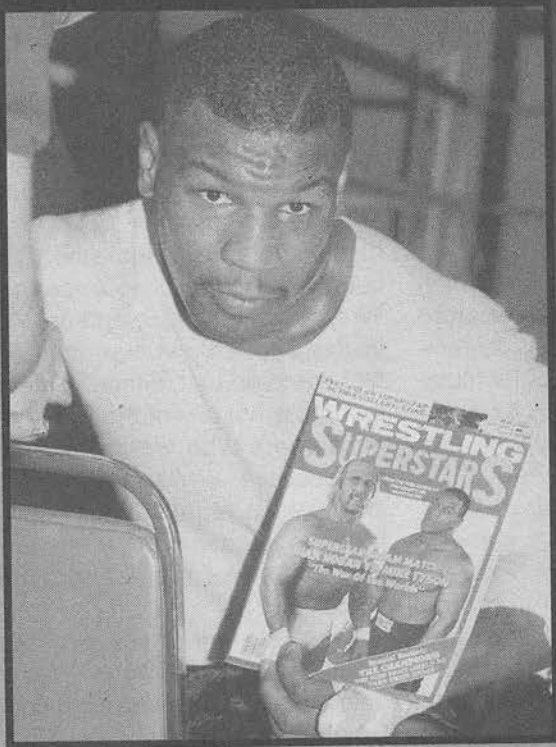
Wrestling

Hell?



Mike Tyson has always basked in his "bad boy" image (above), but it's only in recent years that his behavior has really gotten him in trouble. Tyson nearly triggered a riot after biting off part of Evander Holyfield's ear last year (left).

Mike Tyson is under the impression he can reclaim the title "Baddest Man On The Planet" by challenging a wrestler. While WWF wrestlers have only their ears to protect, perhaps "Iron Mike" should think about protecting what's left of his reputation!



Tyson, holding a copy of *Wrestling Superstars* in 1988, remarked that he wanted to wrestle then-WWF World champion Hulk Hogan (left). During a trip to Japan, Tyson chuckled when he measured the massive girth of sumo wrestler Salevaa Fuauli Alisano (above). Pro wrestlers don't have a sense of humor when it comes to defending their profession.

By Frank Krewda

MIKE TYSON'S LIFE has certainly taken a wicked turn in the last two years. For one-third of his lifetime, after winning the WBC heavyweight from Trevor Berbick at age 20 in 1986, he proudly wore the label

"The Baddest Man On The Planet." And he loved that more than life itself.

But his is not a blessed life, mind you. He had a brutal divorce and many brushes with the law. He suffered a shocking defeat to Buster Douglas in 1990, and went to prison after being convicted of

rape. But after each setback he worked his way back to the top of the fight game and never, never gave up his claim of being "The Baddest Man On The Planet."

That is until he met Evander Holyfield in 1996. And was destroyed. And then again against Holyfield in 1997. And he—in his

own words—snapped. That infamous untimely attack of the munchies earned Tyson an indefinite suspension from boxing—courtesy of the Nevada State Athletic Commission—but most importantly, it stripped him any right to make that “Baddest Man” claim. It would be a year before he could apply to the Nevada Commission for reinstatement to boxing, and for Tyson and his stripped image, that would seem longer than the 3½ years he spent in jail.

Vince McMahon, whose grandfather Jess was a big-time fight promoter, knows a thing or two about the heart of a boxer. Sensing Tyson’s longing for attention and his need for violence, he contacted Tyson’s promoter, Don King, and began negotiations that would lead the former champion,

the former “Baddest Man On The Planet,” to wrestling.

For McMahon, it would mean the kind of mainstream exposure he hasn’t received since Lawrence Taylor wrestled Bam Bam Bigelow at WrestleMania XI.

For Tyson, it could mean the beginning of a new career ... one that could prove dangerous to his health and future and one that he would be a fool to take lightly.

“If Mike Tyson thinks he’s going to scare people in this business,” said Jim Ross, “he’s got another think coming.”

Initially, Tyson was supposed to be a guest referee at WrestleMania XIV. When McMahon tried to make that announcement on *Raw*, he was interrupted by Steve Austin, who seized the microphone and declared that he wanted a piece of Tyson. Tyson smiled

and offered his hand in friendship. But when Austin became increasingly antagonistic, Tyson shoved him. A melee ensued that was mildly reminiscent of his post-ear-biting episode with Holyfield, and the two had to be separated.

Tyson’s immediate reaction was to demand a match with Austin. Whether or not the WWF would comply with that request was unclear at press time. But one thing is certain. Mike Tyson has been bitten (ugh!) by the wrestling “bug,” and one way or another he’s going to satisfy his urge to make his mark on the sport.

He is making a

huge mistake.

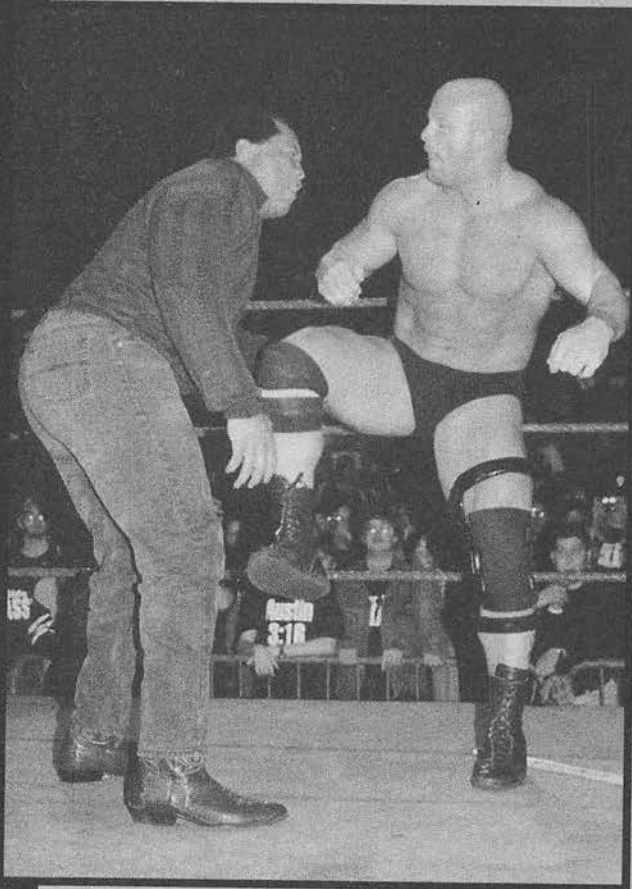
Even if Tyson calms down and agrees to serve as a referee at WrestleMania, you can be sure that one of the two wrestlers in the match would try to goad him into the action. Unprepared for combat but with his pride on the line in front of millions of people, Tyson would have to defend himself and would most likely come up on the short end.

If Tyson gets his way and gets his match, he’ll have problems neither he nor his people could have ever imagined. Not only does Tyson risk serious injury by competing in a sport for which he has done very little training, but he could ruin his chances of making a boxing comeback and blow a potential \$50-million payday a third match with Holyfield could bring.

Tyson can apply to the Nevada Athletic Commission for reinstatement of his boxing license in July, and the Commission’s executive director, Marc Ratner, said, “We cannot tell him not to appear at WrestleMania. If he wants to play in the Super Bowl, we can’t tell him not to do that, either.” Ratner, though, is not one of the five commissioners who will be making the decision. While powerless to stop Tyson legally, who knows how his involvement with wrestling will affect the voting panel come July?

There’s another scenario that mustn’t be ignored. What if Tyson gets beaten up in a wrestling ring? Boxing people might not think that’s a concern, but wrestling fans know better. If that were to happen, even if Tyson were to be reinstated, what would his market value be? Tyson might still have some value coming off the two Holyfield losses, but not with those two losses and a third to Austin.

Undaunted by these long-term ramifications, Tyson vowed to



Steve Austin kicks Faarooq in the midsection before executing a “Stone-Cold stunner.” Would Tyson have a defense against such a maneuver?

make good on his deal with McMahon. He also has a sentimental interest. Those close to him suggest that Tyson, whose interest in WWF wrestling dates back to the days of Bruno Sammartino, Don Leo Jonathan, and

shoot, Mike would ask me all kinds of questions about wrestling," he said. "I always got the feeling that he might like to try wrestling if he ever had the opportunity. But I never expected this."

Indeed, events have unfolded

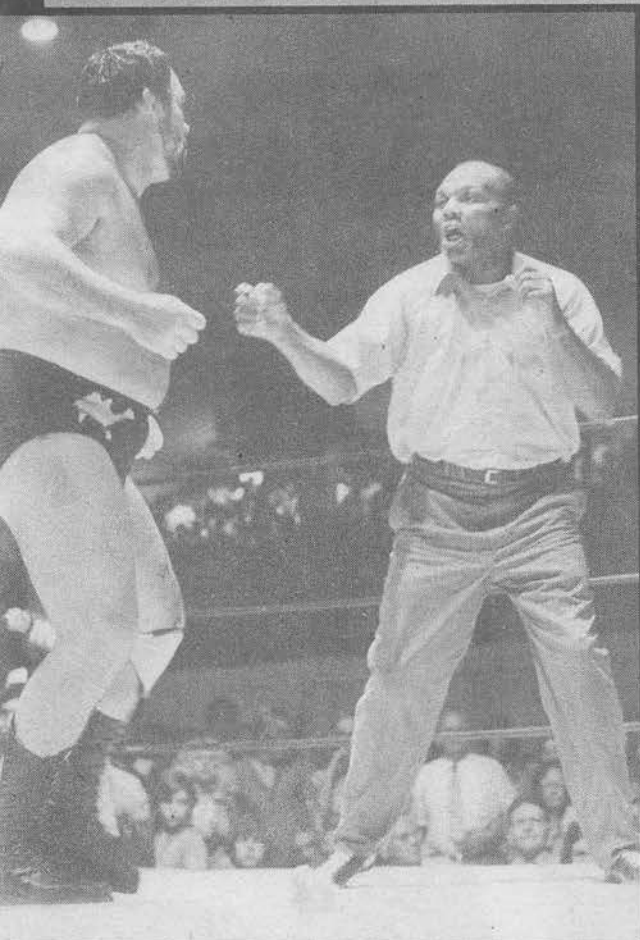
quickly in Tyson's newly hatched wrestling career. He probably didn't anticipate such an outpouring of media attention. In two days, he had gone from being McMahon's guest at the Royal Rumble to being a referee to possibly being a principle in WrestleMania XIV's main event. "Iron Mike's" rapid growth in wrestling is reminiscent of the progress he showed early in his boxing career as he punched a path to title contention. The only

difference between the two is that many of Tyson's early boxing opponents were already defeated by fear before they ever got into the ring. There are no Frank Brunos or Bruce Seldons in the WWF.

In fact, Tyson should expect the opposite reaction from WWF competitors.

"He's not going to reclaim the title 'Baddest Man On The Planet' from anyone in the WWF," said Ross.

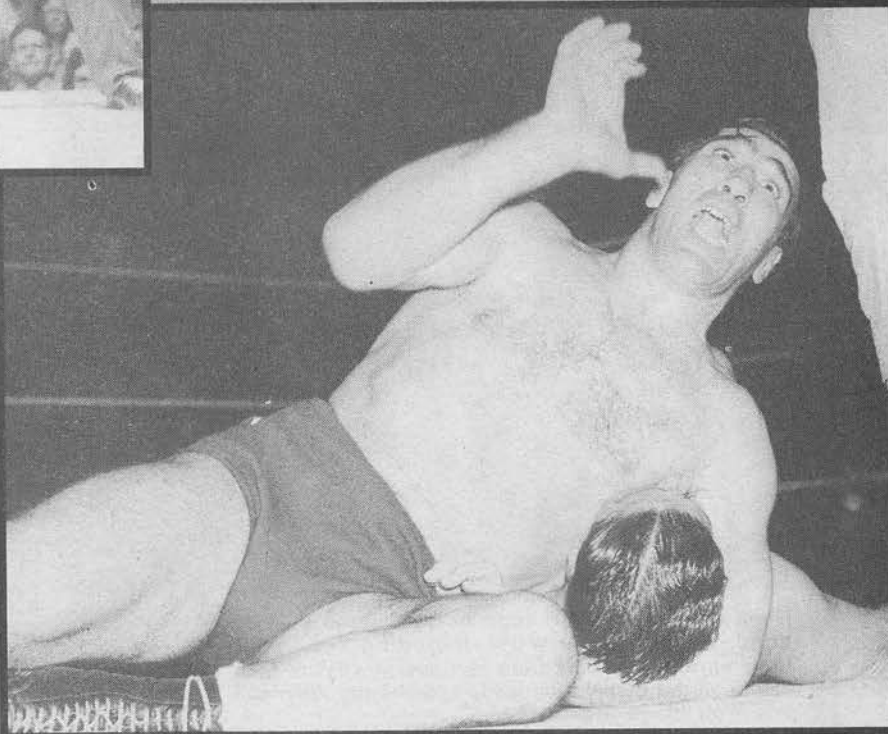
Mike Tyson's fistic accomplishments mean nothing inside a wrestling ring. The feared Tyson reputation that worked so effectively in the fight game has been met with contempt in the WWF. Wrestlers, like boxers, read the history books, too. They know great boxers very rarely make great wrestlers. While Tyson contemplates his next move, he should understand that his name has made him a target. Before he takes another step, he should ponder what it might mean to be the man who put Mike Tyson out of commission. □



Tyson wouldn't be the first boxer to rumble in a wrestling ring. Boxing great Jersey Joe Walcott, serving as a special referee, almost decked The Great Mephisto back in 1973 (above). Primo Carnera (right) was one of the few boxers to totally dedicate himself to wrestling. And he was successful.

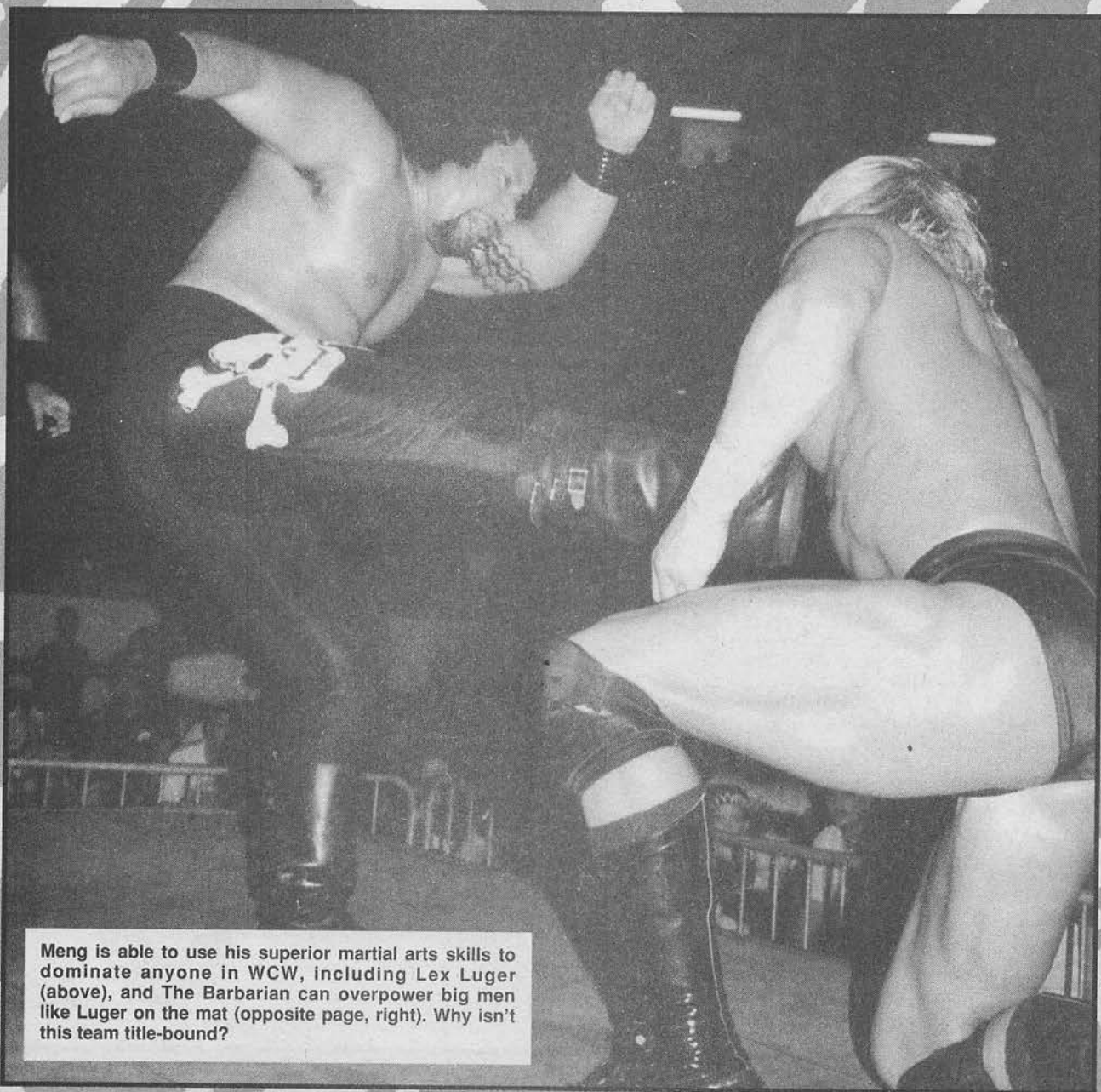
Nikolai Volkoff, looks at this deal as a chance to fulfill his childhood dream of being involved in wrestling. Senior Editor Bill Apter, who doubles as photo editor for our sister boxing publication *The Ring*, remembers fielding many questions about wrestling from Tyson over the years.

"Whenever we did a photo



MENG & THE

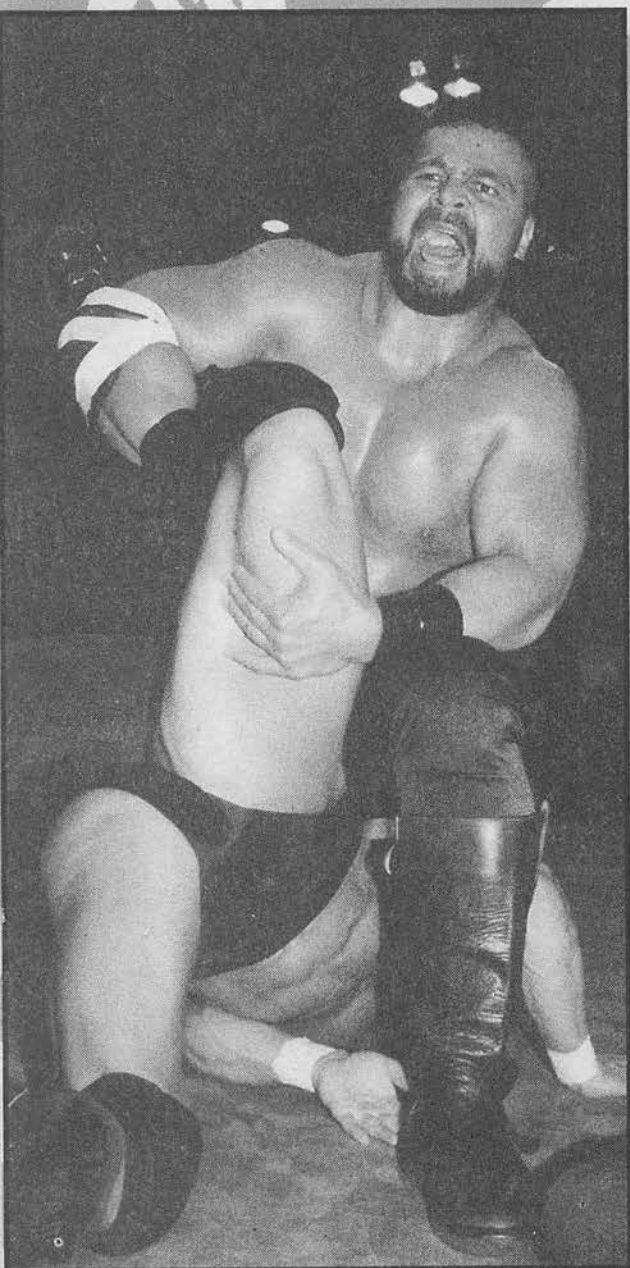
What's Holding Back One Of



Meng is able to use his superior martial arts skills to dominate anyone in WCW, including Lex Luger (above), and The Barbarian can overpower big men like Luger on the mat (opposite page, right). Why isn't this team title-bound?

BARBARIAN

The Sport's Great Teams?



Meng and The Barbarian see themselves as the future of tag team wrestling. But they have yet to convince anyone else of that fact. Even their manager, Jimmy Hart, doesn't seem focused on turning them into a championship team

By Steve Anderson

WHEN MENG AND The Barbarian first began teaming in WCW, experts predicted they would soon rule the tag team scene. In a strategic sense, their duo was formed at precisely the right time. The Road Warriors were still inactive and the Steiners were busy in Japan. Finally, there was a team to usher in a new era of tag team wrestling.

So much for what the experts say.

Good fortune has never come the way of The Faces of Fear. Every time they hit a rhythm and gained some momentum, something bad would happen. For one reason or another, the tandem would splinter off into singles bouts. Charges of incompetence replaced predictions of dominance. Even in singles bouts they would struggle. Apparently they grew so accustomed to teaming that one had trouble functioning without the other.

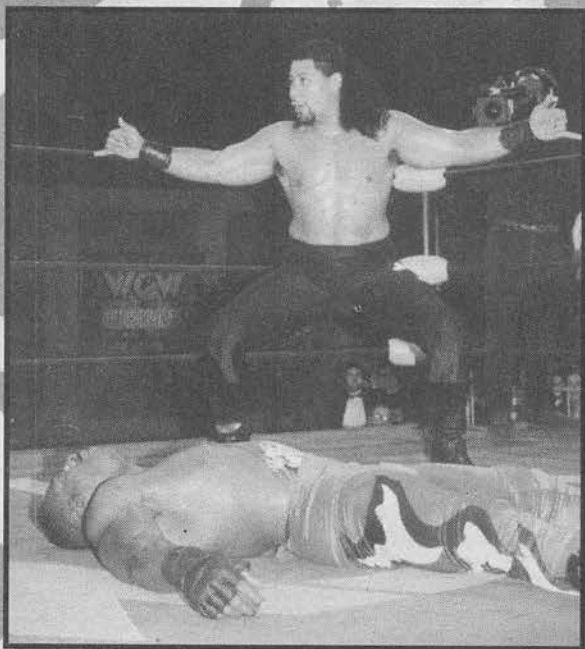
Yet even today they are among the top contenders to the WCW World tag team title. But no longer is anyone waiting for them to win those belts. And no longer is anyone making any bold predictions about them. That's because every time their ship starts sailing toward greatness, there is an anchor that impedes its progress once again.

That "anchor" is none other than their manager, Jimmy Hart.

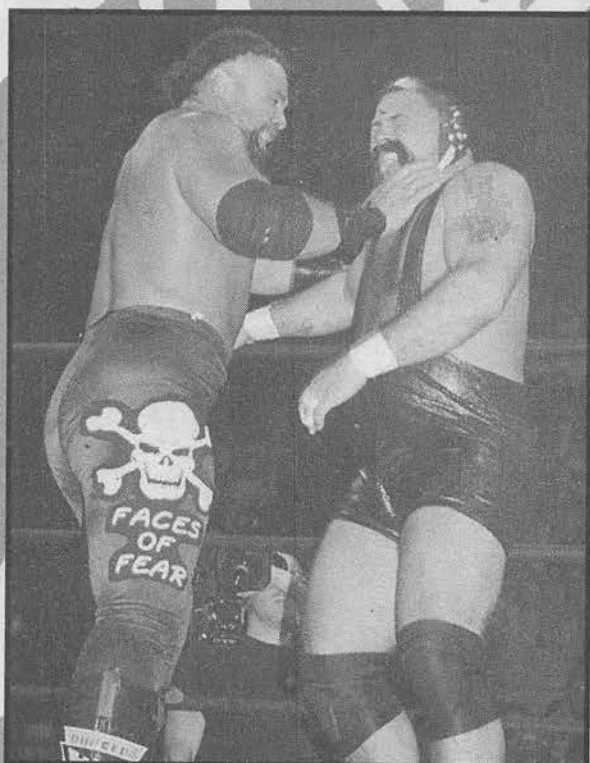
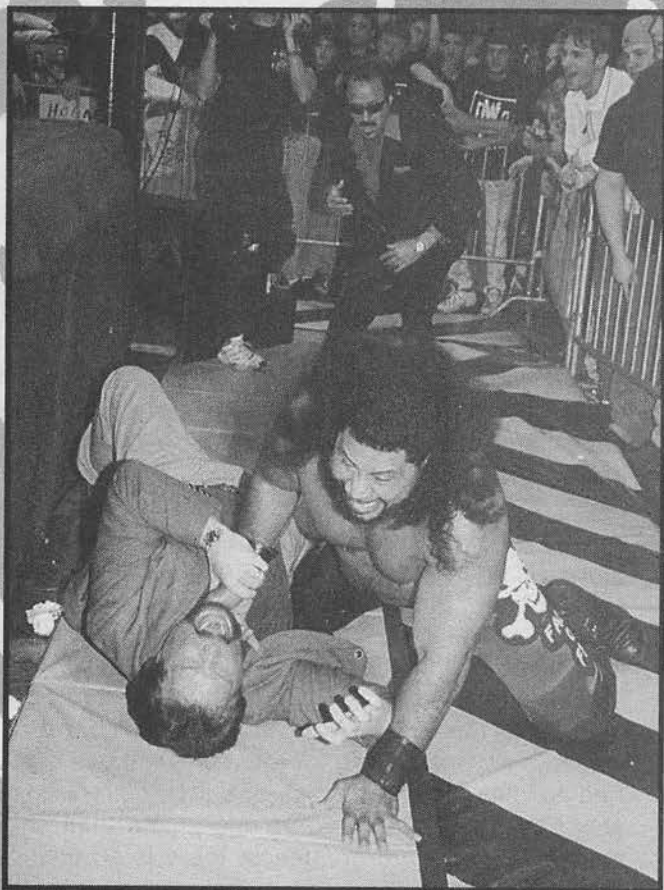
Since breaking away from Hulk Hogan in 1995, Hart has remained a force, but he's not the wrestling power broker he was in the 1980s and early-'90s. He stayed close to Kevin Sullivan's side during his days with the Dungeon of Doom, but that group is now a distant memory. Sometimes weeks go by between his appearances on WCW TV shows now. So why would a top manager outright neglect a team that could return him to greatness? A close associate of Hart spoke to *THE WRESTLER* about that very subject on the condition that his name not be used.

"Jimmy has been in a funk," said the source. "Ever since Sullivan retired and disbanded the Dungeon of Doom, he has felt lost. Because of that, Meng and The Barbarian suffer. It's not entirely their fault that they haven't lived up to people's expectations, but they rely heavily on Jimmy's business savvy. They trust his judgment.

"The truth of the matter is that Jimmy has lacked a game plan for those two for a while now. He won't admit it, but it's true. Instead of key tag matches, Jimmy will book them into meaningless singles matches, just for the quick buck. He isn't putting the effort into their careers that he should be. His spirit doesn't seem to be in it."



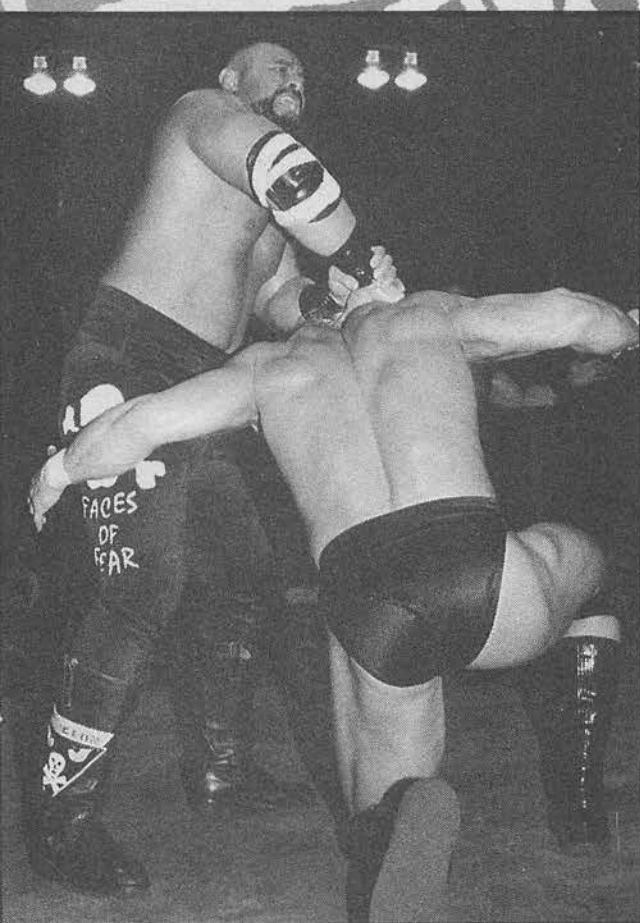
Meng senses victory as Booker T lays prone on the mat. If The Faces of Fear dominated Harlem Heat in this manner, why haven't they won the WCW tag title yet?



The Faces of Fear do not lack intensity. In fact, there aren't many teams more intense than they are. The Barbarian enjoys wrapping his fingers around Rick Steiner's throat (above), while Meng puts the Tongan deathgrip on Ted DiBiase (left).



Jimmy Hart guides The Faces of Fear to the ring. It's too bad for The Barbarian and Meng that he doesn't do a better job of guiding their careers.



In this singles bout, The Barbarian found ways to neutralize Luger's size and strength. An intelligent prematch strategy might have helped him win.

So why isn't Hart focusing on what could be one of the great tag teams of the next five years? The fact that Hart chose not to comment on his relationship with Meng and The Barbarian says a lot. Perhaps the answer can be found deep in Hart's past.

"The minute Bret Hart put pen to paper and signed with WCW, Jimmy began to talk about the good old days of the original Hart Foundation," said the source. "He hadn't talked about it for 10 years and all of a sudden he gets excited and talks about it all the time. The sparkle in his eye returned. He really got fired up when [Jim] Neidhart signed, too. Suddenly, he had a purpose. His career had some real meaning. He could reform his Foundation with the same wrestlers who have improved and increased their value over the past decade. But it couldn't have come at a worse time for Meng and The Barbarian."

The Faces of Fear are hardly oblivious to Hart's neglect. According to the source, they have threatened to end their relationship with Hart if he failed to develop for them a detailed plan that would lead them to championship gold. But they also give Hart his due when it comes to experience, so they continue to stay by his side, waiting for the opportunity to come and waiting for the payoff.

But every wrestler has a breaking point, a time when he says, "Enough is enough." But can Meng and The Barbarian bring themselves to let their long-time confidant go? Believe it or not, he might dump them before they get the chance.

There are reports going around that Hart has already met with his former tag team on numerous occasions. The "Hitman" has looked over the landscape of WCW and realizes he needs someone who has been around for a while. Someone he knows well. He and his ex-manager do have one important thing in common: a total and complete disdain for "Hollywood" Hogan and his NWO cronies. As Hogan's former manager, "The Mouth Of The South" could share valuable insights with Bret.

When asked to comment, Bret would only say, "Yeah, I've talked to Jimmy a number of times since I got here. The past is the past and enough has happened to me to diminish my past problems with Jimmy. But we're not talking business. Nothing is official."

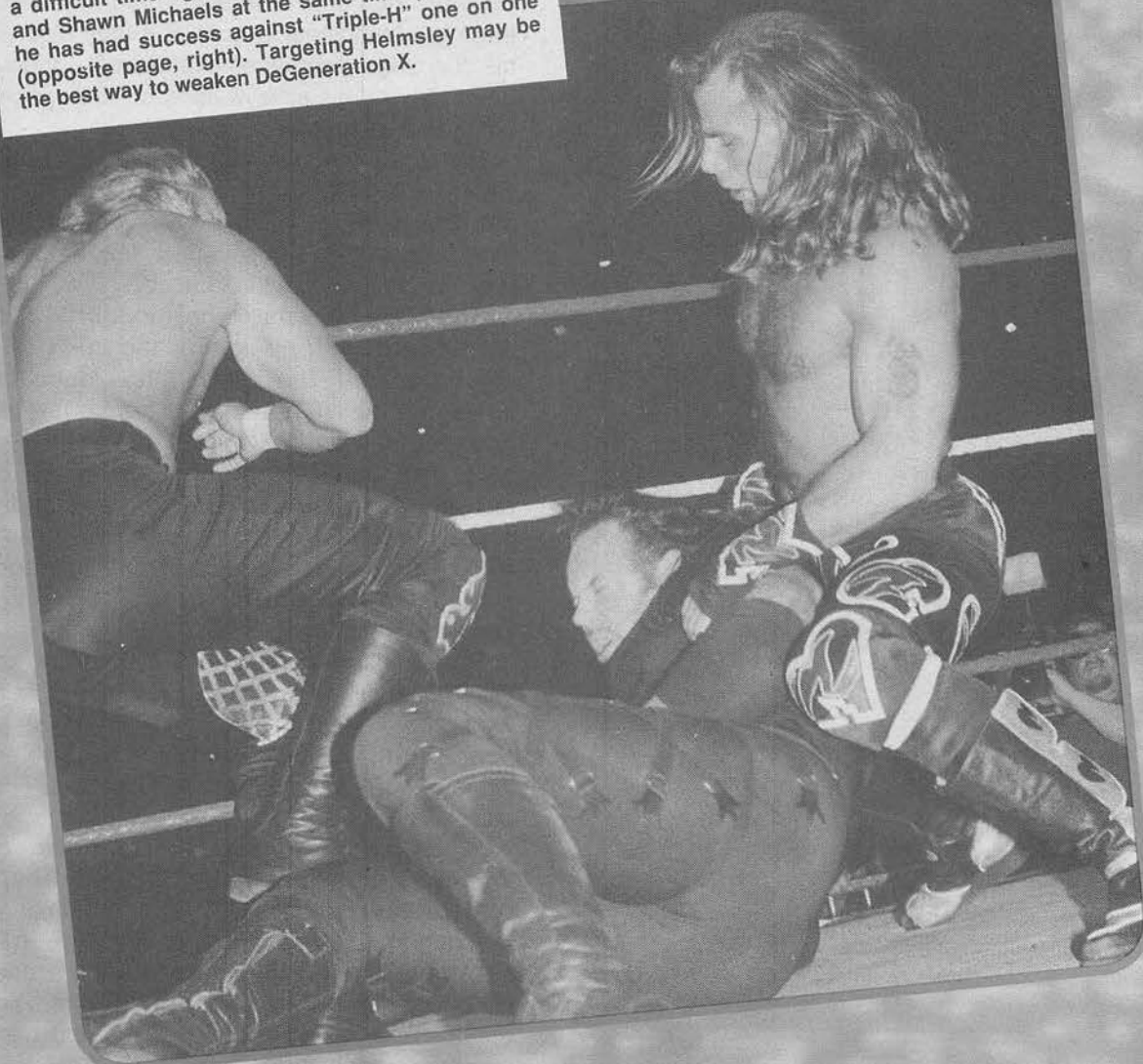
Which brings us back to The Faces of Fear. Where do they fit in as far as Jimmy Hart is concerned? How do they fit in? Do they fit in at all?

Meng and The Barbarian need to stay in the forefront of WCW's diminishing tag team scene if they have any hope of rising above the rest. Right now, greatness for them seems to be as elusive as their manager's attention. □

THE HUNTER OR THE

Will Helmsley Pay For The Sins Of His Partner?

The Undertaker is one of many wrestlers to have had a difficult time fighting off Hunter Hearst Helmsley and Shawn Michaels at the same time (below). But he has had success against "Triple-H" one on one (opposite page, right). Targeting Helmsley may be the best way to weaken DeGeneration X.



HUNTED?



Opposing wrestlers have tried in vain to break up DeGeneration X by attacking its leader, Shawn Michaels. Soon, they may go after the “weak link” in the trio, Hunter Hearst Helmsley

By Bryan Ethier

A NY COMPETENT CEO recognizes that a company is only as strong as its weakest link. In the dog-eat-dinosaur world of pro wrestling, that business axiom translates into the following: Attack the lesser wrestler, and the entire supergroup will crumble like a building with a faulty foundation.

The key then is to recognize who the weak link *is* in the wrestling group or partnership. That is not as simple or clear as it might seem. One need only watch mediocre tag teams such as the Godwinns, Jesse James and Billy Gunn, and directionless gangs such as The Disciples of Apocalypse, Nation of Domination, and Los Boricuas to realize that the opposition has yet to determine their respective faulty links.

Such groups thrive as long as they are able to camouflage their athletic and intellectual feebleness. Tandems such as Gunn and James make violence and underhandedness their modus operandi.

Do these tenets of business apply to the WWF's foremost collection of athletes and personalities, DeGeneration X? Clearly, DX is running amok in the WWF, thanks to its ringleader, cheerleader, and chief miscreant, Shawn Michaels. Linked with former I-C champ Hunter Hearst Helmsley and mysterious bodybuilder Chyna, DX may be the most contemptuous triumvirate in the long and storied history of the sport.

Michaels and Helmsley complement each other so well that it is hard to imagine them losing a tag team match if they put their minds to it.

Therein punctuates the dilemma facing opposing wrestlers and tag teams. How do you recognize a fissure in this concrete-like foundation? One might think that without Michaels at the helm, DX would be little more than a narciss-



Helmsley is awfully cocky when he has his DX mates to back him up (above left), but he even struggled in a match with Sgt. Slaughter (above right). He is vulnerable.

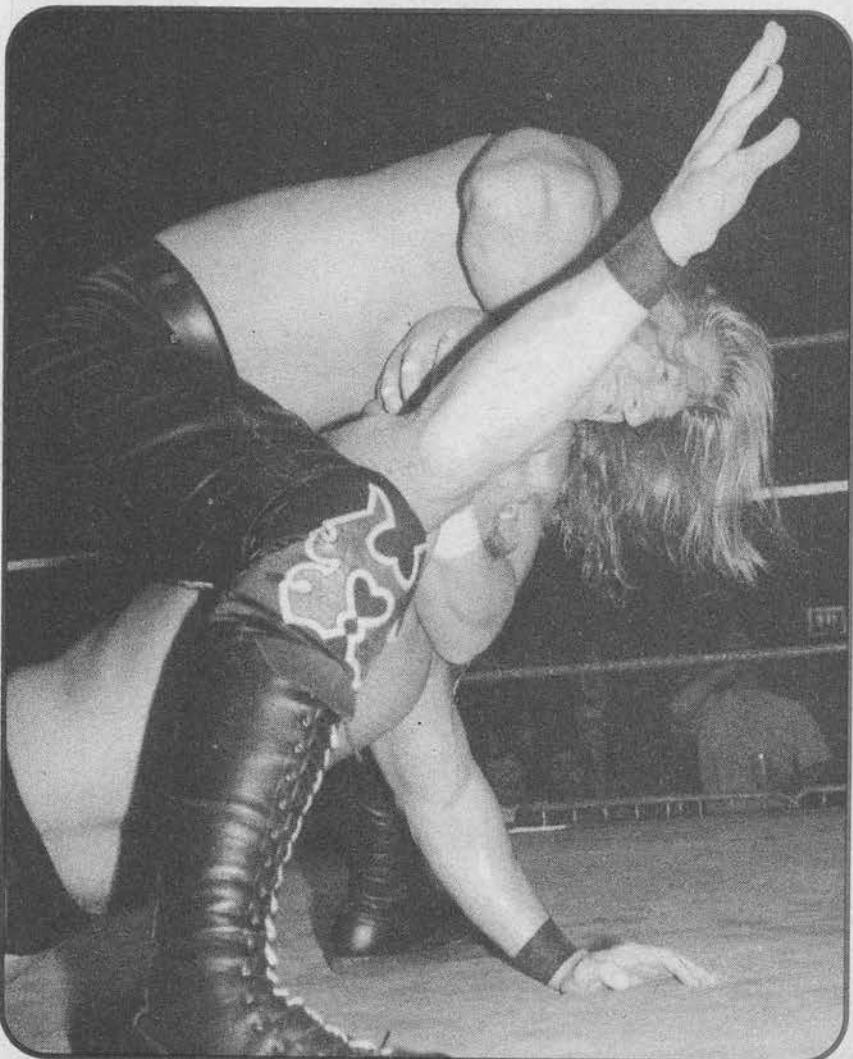
sistic face-off between two stars unable to go more than nine seconds without peering into a mirror.

"If that were true, don't you think someone would have accomplished that goal?" mused WWF Commissioner Sgt. Slaughter, who has been assailed and humiliated by DX on numerous occasions. "If you haven't noticed, a lot of people keep attacking Michaels and yet they never knock him off his perch."

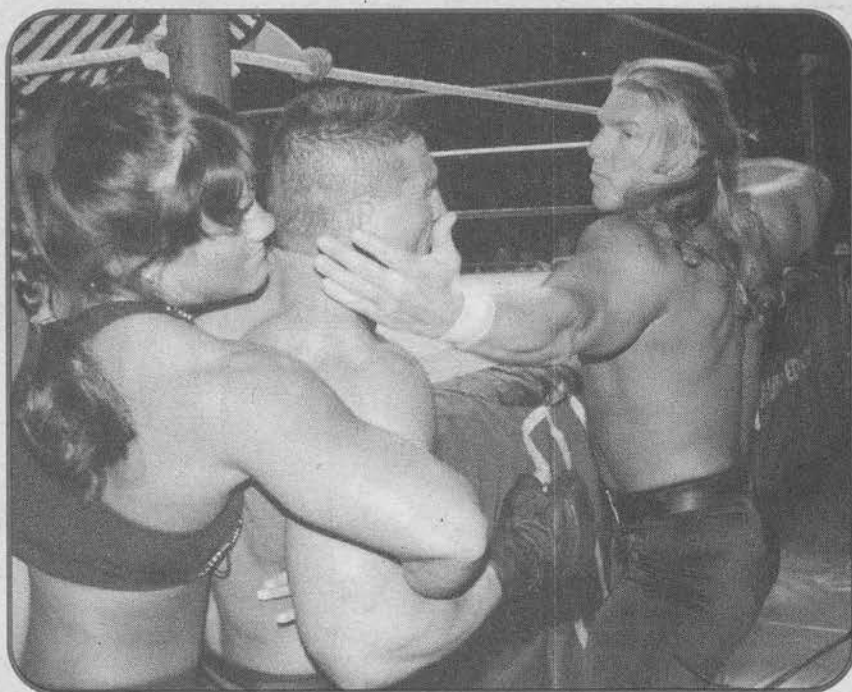
That's grim news for Helmsley, who has come under attack from opponents such as Ken Shamrock and Owen Hart thanks to Michaels' antisocial behavior.

"Never go after the backbone of an organization," says Shamrock. "Even if the other members are strong, there is always a dropoff in talent or in commitment between the heart of the group and the others. Eventually, as you sift through the ranks, you distinguish the soldiers from the field generals. The key is that when you study strong organizations, you have to look for the one time a key member carried one of his colleagues."

Shamrock is on to something. Those who closely watched Michaels' match with "Triple-H" for the European championship saw a champion who fell too easily to



Helmsley applies a sleeperhold on Steve Austin, one of the many WWF wrestlers who has seen enough of DX. We could see a lot of them going after "Triple-H" in the next few months.



As long as Chyna is around to help him, Helmsley is able to handle tough guys like Ken Shamrock. DX is only strong when its members are able to work together.

the challenger. Obviously, Michaels let Helmsley to win. As if "The Heartbreak Kid" needed to protect his colleague, to bolster his ego, to strengthen that weak link in the chain of command.

"Shawn Michaels made a mistake that night," says Austin. "He showed the world who he has wrestling alongside him. Helmsley ain't that much compared to Michaels."

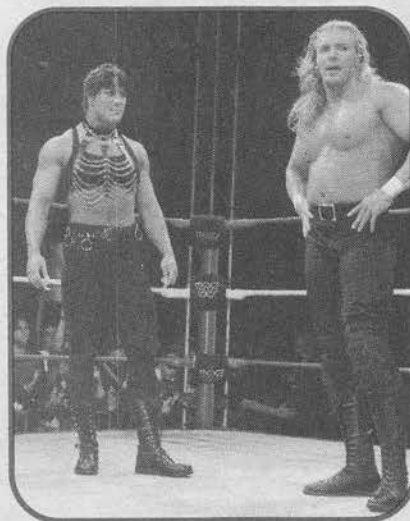
On December 29, Michaels was forced to defend his WWF World belt against Owen Hart because an injured Helmsley was unable to participate. If, as Austin and Shamrock intimate, Helmsley is the weak link in DX, what degree of threat does he pose to the integrity of the group? Remember, this is a former I-C champ, a schooled wrestler who, when not chasing women, has proven to be a solid technical grappler. To consider him significantly inferior in talent to Michaels is fallacious.

But Helmsley is Michaels' junior when it comes to talent and athleticism. The reason is simple. Michaels, because he has the edge in experience, has been

through many more ring wars than Helmsley. He has also competed at a peak level for several years now. Helmsley is just beginning to come into his own.

It seems some of the more astute wrestlers are catching on to this. Requests for matches against DX have more than doubled in the last six months, according to a WWF source.

"When guys talk to me about



Somehow, Chyna and Helmsley are just not as formidable a force as Chyna, Helmsley, and Michaels. Same goes for Shawn and Chyna. Would there be a DX if either Helmsley or Michaels left?

upcoming matches, they seem to ask more questions about the health and status of Helmsley than of Michaels," explains a WWF matchmaker. "I doubt tag teams are even interested in squaring off in the ring with Shawn. They want to get Helmsley in a compromising position—on the ring apron or two-on-one. Anything to get him at a disadvantage. Then who knows?"

"Who knows?" translates into bringing Helmsley down. That may mean injuring him or just crushing his ego to the point at which he no longer is an asset to the trio. Then the group will slowly implode, at least according to theory.

Ironically, Helmsley's value to the group is more subtle than that of Michaels. "HBK" is the source of light, of controversy. But Helmsley serves as a great source of inspiration for Shawn; he is the respectful sidekick—Ed McMahon to Johnny Carson, Bud Abbott to Lou Costello. Michaels thrives in the spotlight; Helmsley is the lamp that provides a beacon of light too bright for his superstar to ignore.

Without "Triple-H," Michaels is a tornado without the undercurrents to keep from him raging out of control.

"It's clear what DeGeneration X would be without Helmsley," laughed Jim Cornette. "Can you imagine 'The Heartbreak Kid' and Chyna? A mouth that roared and a mouth that sneered. How long would they last?"

It is one thing to identify the weak link, it is quite another to eradicate it. A great CEO has a plan to tear him off the chain. Thus far, any schemes to snap "Triple-H" from the DX chain have failed.

"Give us time," adds a fan favorite. "We have our man targeted and we know how we'll get him. Actually, we may not have to do anything at all. It might just happen, the way a lion sometimes eats its young."

Were it that easy ...



Photos by Brandi Mankiewicz

THREE-WAY

STEPPING UP

THE VIOLENCE

LEVEL

IN THE ECWA!

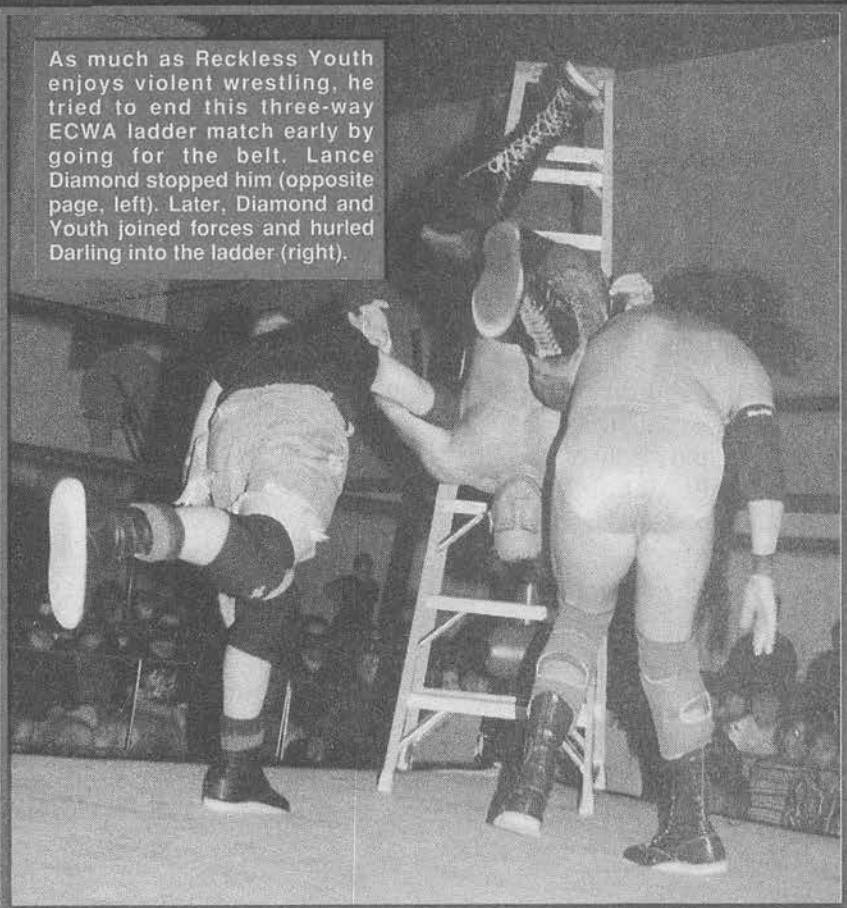
So you thought there was no way to make a ladder match even more violent than it already is? Try suspending a championship belt above the ring ... then placing not two, but three hungry competitors inside.

Want to know more?

Read on ...

LADDER LUNACY!

As much as Reckless Youth enjoys violent wrestling, he tried to end this three-way ECWA ladder match early by going for the belt. Lance Diamond stopped him (opposite page, left). Later, Diamond and Youth joined forces and hurled Darling into the ladder (right).



By Craig Peters

IN A WAY, you have to pity ECWA officials. Based on the East Coast, mired in violence, and just one "A" away from that *other* East Coast federation mired in violence, the ECWA has several strikes against it in its struggle for recognition.

But when it comes to drawing the brutal best out of the top com-

petitors on its roster, the ECWA knows exactly what to do. Indeed, the recent three-way ladder match for the ECWA Mid-Atlantic title was a spectacular exhibition of wrestling violence.

"It was a ripoff!" screamed Lance Diamond, who was involved in the bout.

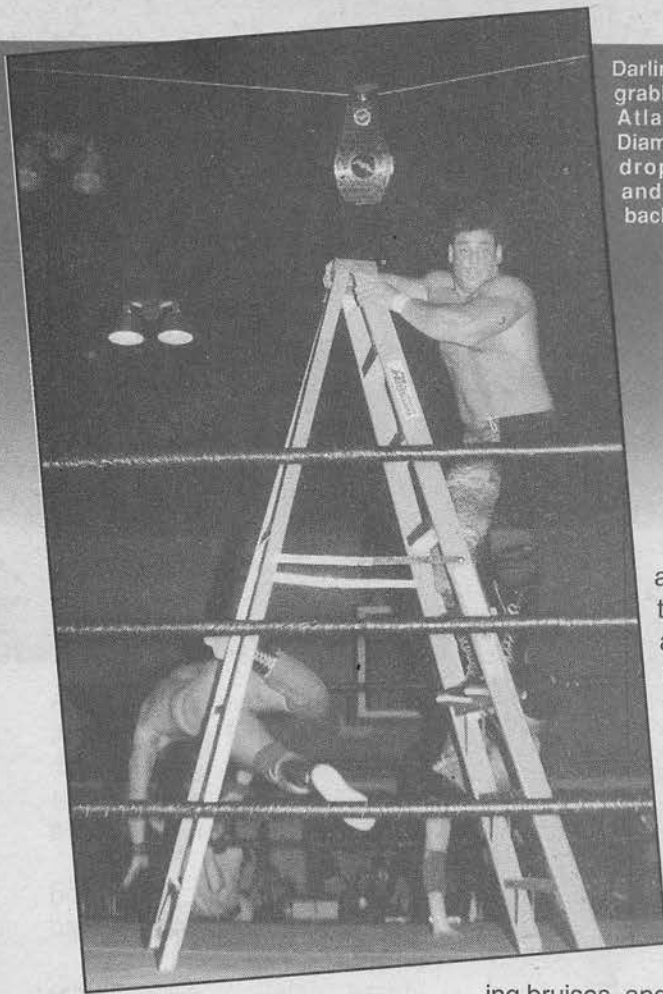
"It was pathetic, considering the total lack of officiating," accused Ace Darling, who was involved in the bout.

"It was one of the greatest nights of my career," boasted Reckless Youth, who was involved in the bout.

Guess who came out of the contest wearing the championship gold.

"As far as I'm concerned, this was between me and Reckless Youth," said Diamond. "Look, let's go back in time, okay? You figure it out. Youth and I, we had a match, okay? Okay. Fine. I can deal with him. I have many times in the past, and I have plans to take care of business again very soon in the future.

"But then along comes Darling," Diamond continued, "strutting his pathetic excuse of a self to ringside like he has any real business being there. Hah! You know, I can take care of my own matches, I don't need Darling at ringside taunting



Darling was very close to grabbing the ECWA Mid-Atlantic belt before Diamond and Youth both dropkicked the ladder and sent him tumbling back down.

anything doing with the ECWA officials and was willing to risk my career for some kind of fool scam like that, don't you think I'd do it with a fool-proof plan that has me leaving the ring wearing the belt? Forget it, man! I was wear-

ing bruises, and plenty of them!"

No question about that. Put Youth, Diamond, and Darling in the ring together,

me or my opponent. That was an 'iron man' match, and I had Youth taken care of, but Darling's fool interference made sure the result was a draw. Damn! But of course he has the officials in his back pocket, so that's what *that* was all about!"

Say what, Lance?

"Oh, sure, you think I don't know what went on?" Diamond asked rhetorically. "Of course I do! It was all a pretense! Fact is, ECWA bylaws don't allow for three-way matches unless certain conditions apply. Darling wanted to shoehorn himself into a match for the title, so he worked it all out with the officials. He comes to ringside and makes a big stink, they give him a free pass into the three-way grab for the gold. What, like I can't read the handwriting on the wall in front of my face?"

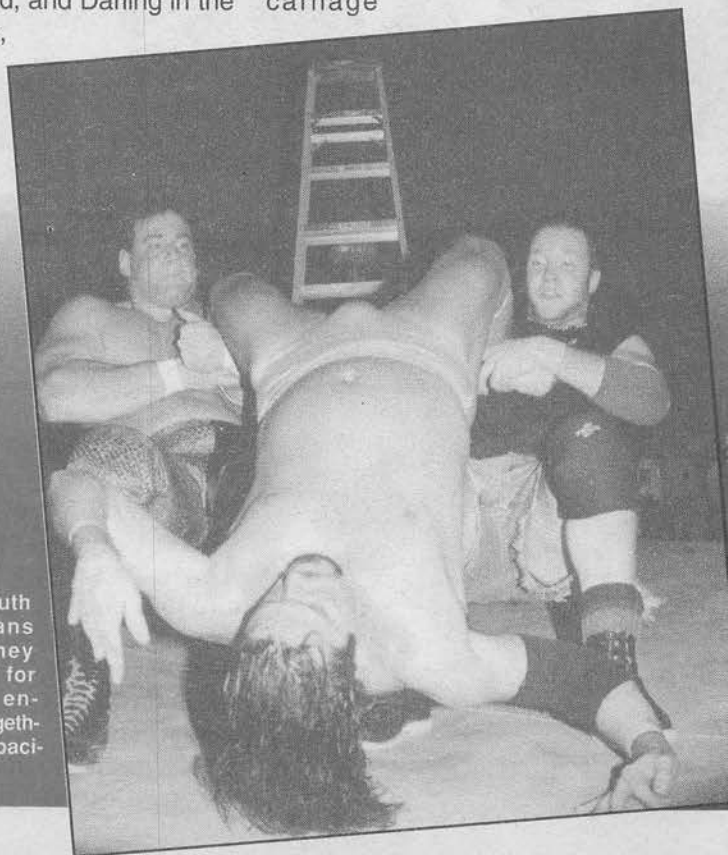
"That's the most absurd thing I ever heard in my life!" Darling responded. "First of all, if I had

and you'd be hard-pressed to find any of the three giving even the slightest kind of positive comment about anybody else in there with him.

But having a ladder as a weapon and a championship belt suspended above the ring can make impromptu allies of even the worst enemies ... which is exactly what happened.

"It was the most incredible match I've ever seen!" said Mark Riddell, a long-time fan of ECWA action. "I mean, here are three guys who'd just as soon kill each other as look at each other, and you have Youth and Diamond double-teaming Darling, Diamond and Darling combining against Youth, Darling and Youth brutalizing Diamond—it seemed like it would never end! You had guys dropkicking the ladder into each other, you had guys smashing the ladder over each other's heads, you had Youth showing how reckless he *really* is by doing moonsaults off the ladder ... absolutely incredible!"

And in the end, you had Reckless Youth emerging from the carnage



Darling and Youth are by no means friends, but they share a hatred for Diamond and enjoyed working together to try to incapacitate him.

with the championship gold.

"Well of course I came out of the match as the champion—what else would you expect?" Youth asked THE WRESTLER.

Of course, the question isn't so much what the public expected, as what does the public expect next?

"A match like this only serves to raise the bar in terms of the lowest acceptable level of ultraviolence in a federation," explained WRESTLER Publisher Stu Saks. "When you have a match such as this, particularly in a championship situation, what you're doing is akin to raising the ante in a poker game.

"What ECWA officials have to concern themselves with now is this: Where do they go from here?" Saks continued. "When a title is won in a three-way match like this, title defenses take on a whole new character and flavor. It's no longer enough to simply put the title on the line in a one-on-one conventional contest. The champion, in order to prove himself both to the federation and to himself,

needs to raise the stakes. I'm worried, quite frankly. Will three-man barbed-wire explosion matches become de rigeur for ECWA

With Darling down and feeling pretty bad outside the ring, Youth couldn't resist putting the boots to him. Afterward, he insisted that this match did nothing to raise the violence level of the ECWA. Huh?

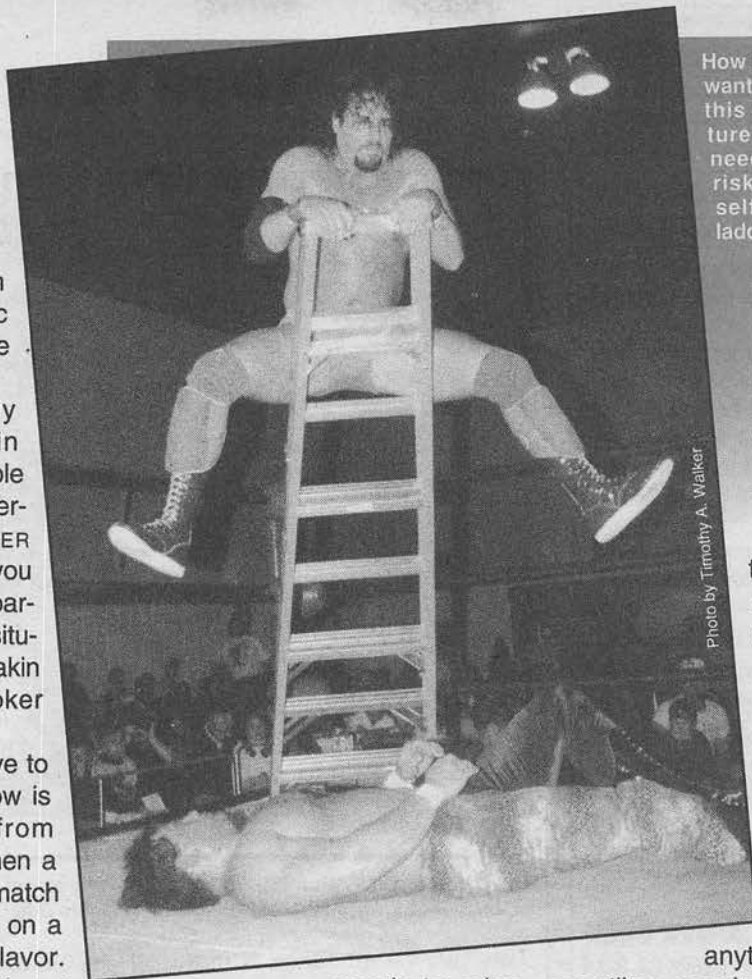
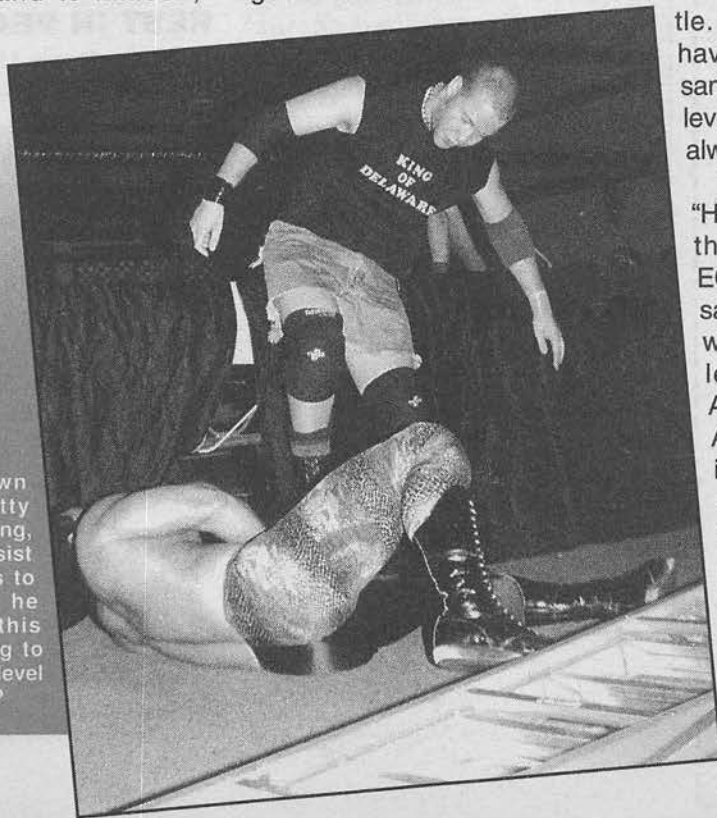


Photo by Timothy A. Walker

How badly did Diamond want to hurt Darling in this match? This picture tells you all you need to know. Lance risked injury to himself as he drove the ladder into his rival.

title defenses? It's not out of the question."

"That's a load of hooey!" said Reckless Youth. "That match did nothing to raise the violence level of the ECWA, of my matches, or of

anything else. This is

wrestling, so what the hell do you expect? You don't want violence, go to a flower show or a WCW card. You want the real deal, come to the ECWA and watch me wrestle. I'll give ya violence. Always have, always will. And that's the same deal as the general violence level in ECWA: always been high, always will be. Deal with it."

"Youth's wrong," said Diamond. "He's totally off base if he thinks this match doesn't raise the ECWA violence level. I'm here to say it did—and it will. Because I will go to any lengths—any lengths—to take that Mid-Atlantic title that's rightfully mine. And if Ace Darling wants to get in my way? Hell, I'll be happy to raise the ECWA violence level at his expense, too."

Diamond spat a juicy gob onto the dressing room floor, then ground his heel into the viscous puddle.

"You ain't seen *nothing* yet." □

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YOUR LETTERS

(Continued from page 5)



The death of Dick "Bulldog" Brower (shown against Joe Blanchard) saddened reader Jerry Motta, who admired his brutality in the ring.

This guy never takes a night off. Every match is exciting and you never see the same move from him twice.

Sure, I have seen Sanchez on some WCW television shows, but he is always matched against heavyweights like Dallas Page or Lex Luger. He is never given a chance to compete in the cruiserweight division. Hey, WCW, show some intelligence!

STEVE DRUMMOND
Queens, NY

NO PULSE?

With all due respect to Killer Kowalski, how can the editorial staff at THE WRESTLER take his opinions seriously? It doesn't matter who the subject of "X-Ray" is. Kowalski always spews out the same line of garbage: "He isn't tough enough, he isn't mean enough, he's not a *real* rulebreaker."

I give Kowalski full marks for being a wrestling pioneer, but the sport has evolved and left Killer behind. Please replace him on

your panel with somebody who has a finger on the pulse of today's stars.

WALLY FOXX
Irvine, CA

REST IN PEACE

I was deeply saddened to learn that two of my all-time favorite wrestlers—Dick "Bulldog" Brower and Jeep Swenson—had died. Few wrestlers could match these two loons in the brutality department.

Brower was crazy, while Swenson had the biggest arms I've ever seen on a human being—even though he was far from being in outstanding shape.

I guess what made them so entertaining was their unpredictability. They could go off at any moment and were powerful enough to inflict a lot of damage.

JERRY MOTTA
Lexington, KY ☐

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THIS Month In...

Inside Wrestling



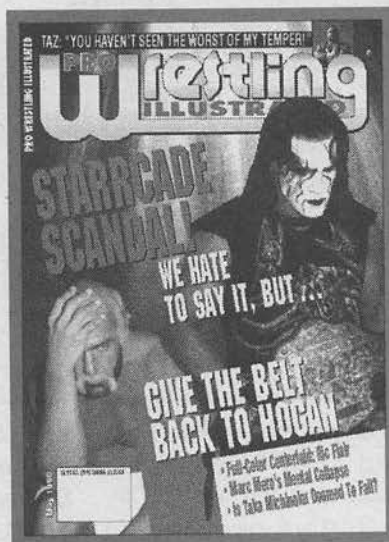
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It's Computer Tournament time. We dumped all the pertinent information on 16 of the sport's biggest stars into our computer, set up a bracket, and sat back and waited for the results. You won't believe what happened in the end. We got **BRET HART** vs. **SHAWN MICHAELS**—to a *real* finish! ... We'll tell you what **SCOTT HALL** had to do to emerge from his private hell ... Don't miss our candid "Hotseat" interview with **MARLENA**. She had a lot to say about her husband, **GOLDUST** ... **CHRIS BENOIT** has a message for WCW: "Don't let **RAVEN**'s Flock become the next NWO!"

All this—and much more!—
in the April 1998 issue of
Inside Wrestling

NOW ON SALE!

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED



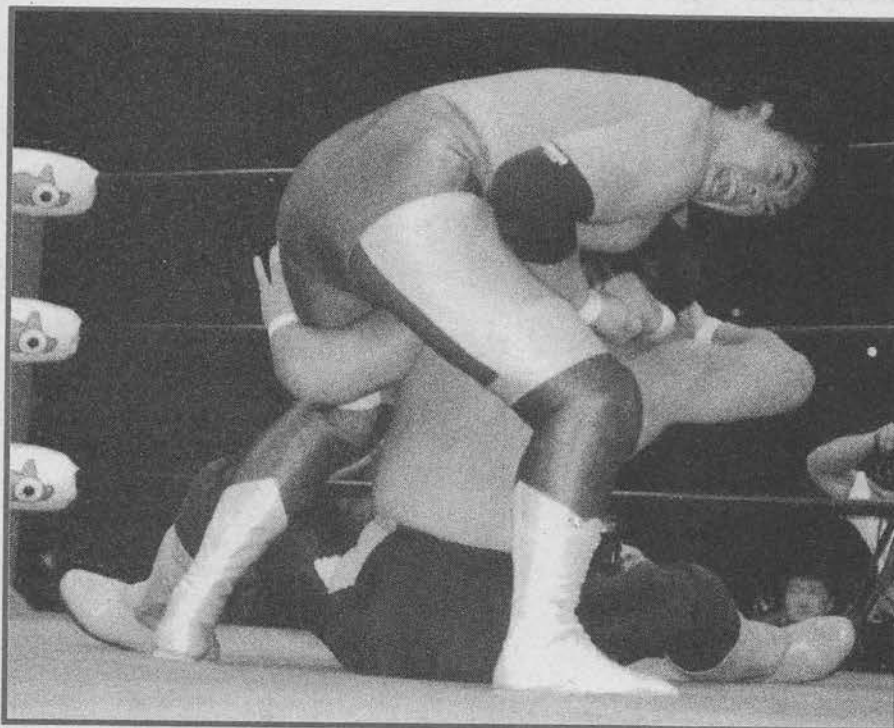
We hate to say it. Oh, how it pains us to have to say this, but if you look at what happened at Starrcade objectively, you might agree that it's the right thing to do: Give the WCW belt back to **HULK HOGAN**! ... You won't want to miss our match-by-match rundown of Starrcade and our analysis of how it reshaped the WCW-NWO war ... Were you surprised to see **MARC MERO**'s demeanor change a few months ago? **BILL APTER** wasn't. He saw it coming after Mero accused his son of "looking at Sable" way back in 1996! ... Check out our full-color centerfold of **RIC FLAIR**

All this—and much more—
in the May 1998 issue of
Pro Wrestling Illustrated

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

(Continued from page 7)



Mitsuharu Misawa (seen here against Toshiaki Kawada) is just one of the All-Japan wrestlers the WWF is interested in adding to its roster. Kawada, another top All-Japan heavyweight, is also under consideration.

superstars. It'll be great for both our organizations if we can work this out" ... Mexico's Promo Azteca promotion is starting a separate women's division ... ECW's **Justin Credible** racked up another amazing victory by beating international star **The Great Sasuke** again in January at the ECW Arena.

I cannot believe the temper tantrums **Chris Jericho** has been throwing lately.

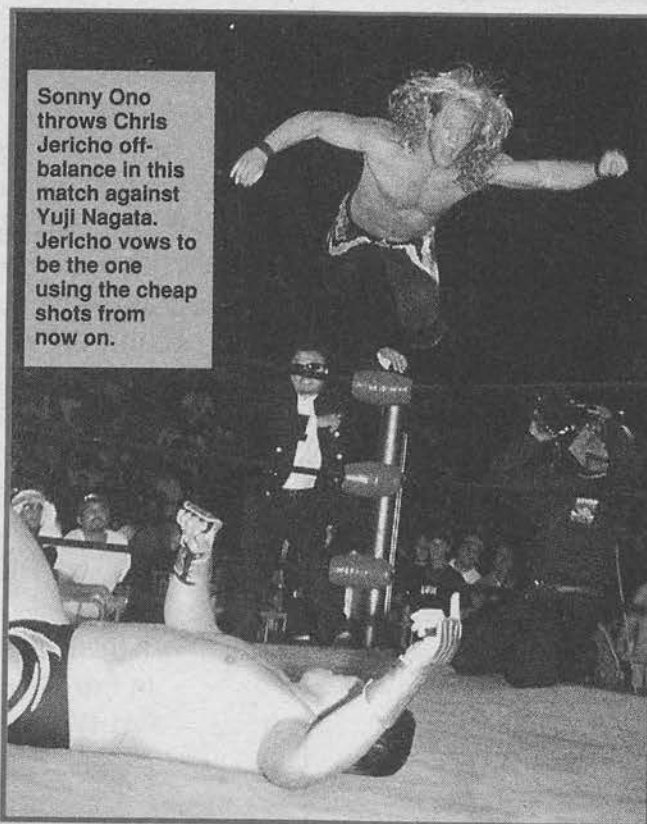
"Yeah, I'm mad, mainly at myself," Jericho said. "I have to change my entire style, because what I'm doing isn't working." Jericho cites his match against U.S. champion "**Diamond**" **Dallas**

Funk was assisted by **Pat Patterson** and **Tom Prichard** ... **Wolfie D** has won the Music City Wrestling North American title from **Terry Golden**. By the way, Music City has been accepted into the National Wrestling Alliance. **Jeff Jarrett**, who is the NWA North American champion says, "That's great news. Music City mainly promotes in Tennessee, my home state, so now all my thousands of fans in that state will see the great Jeff Jarrett in person a lot more often!"

WWF officials have initiated discussions with All-Japan Pro Wrestling regarding an exchange of talent. "It would be great to have some of their stars, like **Mitsuharu Misawa** and **Toshiaki Kawada**, compete in the WWF," talent coordinator **Bruce Prichard** said. "In

turn, the Japanese fans may get to see our great champion, **Shawn Michaels**, along with **The Undertaker** and other WWF

Sonny Ono throws Chris Jericho off-balance in this match against Yuji Nagata. Jericho vows to be the one using the cheap shots from now on.



Page as a perfect example. "Page, like most of the guys in WCW, doesn't care how he wins. He just cares about winning. Maybe all those aerial moves I often use need to be dumped. I'm not worried about impressing the fans anymore. Maybe kicking, punching, and fouling—like everyone else does in WCW—is the way to go. Yeah, the Chris Jericho you know in WCW is about to leave, and the new one is about to embark on a reign of terror that will continue until he gets some belts and some more money!"

That's what's happening. I'll see you at the matches! □

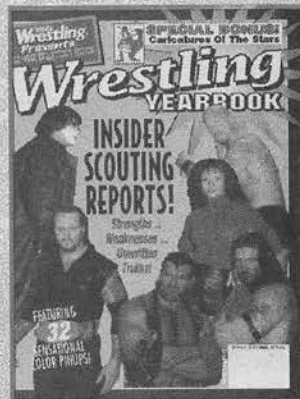
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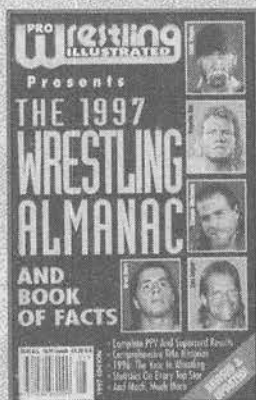
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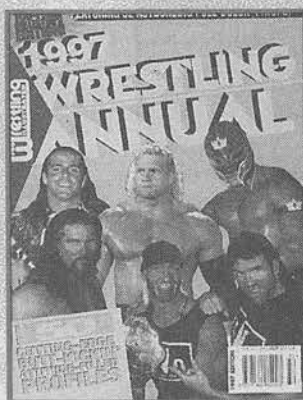
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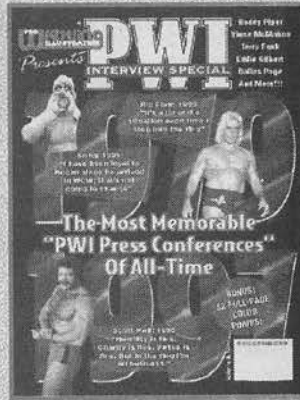
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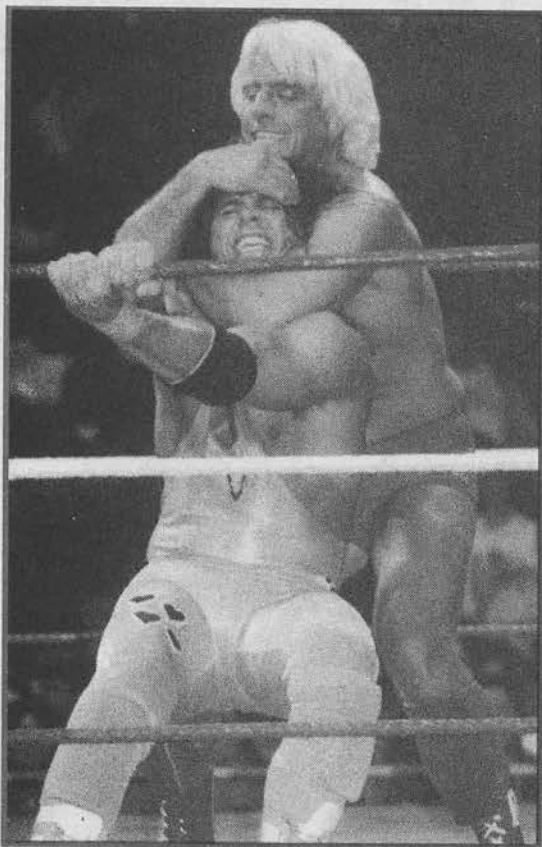
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NO HOLDS BARRED

(Continued from page 8)



Flair is reluctant to release his sleeperhold despite the fact that Hart has reached the ropes. Even back in 1992 in the WWF, Flair resorted to desperate measures against the "Hitman." He's still obsessed with beating him.

Flair numerous times in the WWF. And Flair left the federation with both feuds unresolved. But with Hart, Flair harbors an even bigger grudge.

Maybe it's because Hart defeated Flair for the WWF World title on his first try. Not only did he beat the "Nature Boy" once, he did it again ... and again ... and again. Flair left the WWF without his title and without a clean or tainted win over Bret Hart. So when Hart talks about being the "best," the phrase means something to the "Nature Boy." Perhaps his fear is that Bret is right.

You see, Flair usually finds ways to avenge losses to superstar opponents. Think about it. He did it with Dusty Rhodes, with Kerry Von Erich, with Harley Race

... and eventually with Hulk Hogan (after many, many tries). When he has needed to, Flair has always been able to prove to himself and others that he is "the man." If he does dominate what I'm sure will be a long, intense feud with the "Hitman" in WCW, though, what is he really accomplishing? Just proving again that he is one of the all-time greats and arguably the greatest. But again, we all know that already. And if Flair is dominated by Hart—a real possibility—then he just looks bad.

As Flair prepared for his showdown with Bret Hart at Souled Out, I couldn't help but notice that his actions leading up to that confrontation were similar to his actions in the spring and summer of 1994. And

it's not just Bret Hart who is driving him crazy. Anyone who says Hart is the best earns the wrath of the "Nature Boy." Jim Neidhart found that out first-hand when he made his *Nitro* debut. Flair attacked

Neidhart simply because he had the nerve to praise Bret Hart, his brother-in-law. Flair went so far as to apply Hart's own figure-four around the ringpost.

As the self-proclaimed dirtiest player in the game, Flair has attacked a lot of wrestlers over the years. But his attacks are usually not without motivation. In this case, Flair snapped for all the wrong reasons. So Bret Hart and his family think he's the best wrestler in history. Big deal. What would you expect them to say? That Bret is the best ever except for Ric Flair? But Flair took it all as a criticism of him.

One major key to Ric Flair's long-term success has been his ability to focus. He was focused in 1994, but only until Hogan arrived. When the ticker-tape parade for the "Hulkster" commenced, Flair went ballistic. Again, Flair is paranoid about his place in history. He shouldn't worry. Thirteen world title reigns speak very loudly.

But perhaps not as loud as Bret Hart saying he is "the best there is, the best there was, and the best there ever will be."

Somehow I get the feeling he'll keep on using that phrase regardless of the outcome of his matches with Flair. □

TOP 10 ALTERNATE CHOICES FOR STING'S FIRST WORDS

10. I'm not going to pay a lot for this muffler!
9. The next person to call me The Crow gets the business end of this bat!
8. Why the long hair? Have you seen the prices at Cost Cutters?
7. Goin' down to South Park. Gonna have myself a time.
6. I'm Sting and I can paint my face for \$99.95!
5. Now what was I talking about?
4. You wanna clean those rafters for the next guy who freaks out?
3. I'm so glad that my trauma could cause a surge in Sting mask sales.
2. So what's the deal with Bret Hart being here?
1. Hey, Macarena!

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CORRESPONDENTS REPORTS

(Continued from page 14)

for several minutes. Neither man would comply with referee Rick Weed's plea to end the illegal double-teaming, so they were disqualified. Although the match was officially over, Macabre and Cremator continued to punish Shadows until Bob Keller stormed into the ring to save him.

In other bouts: Bobby Davidson defeated The Inferno ... Combat Kid pinned Bob Keller after interference from Diablos Macabre to win the Southeastern heavyweight championship ... Major Mayhem beat Mohammed Kane in a flag match ... Maxx Crimson beat Juggernaut by countout ... King Kong Bundy pinned Mark Mest.

New York, NY (Correspondent—Jen Polletti): Rocky Maivia may think he's the leader of The Nation of Domination, but all he

did during a tag team bout at Madison Square Garden was lead D-Lo Brown to slaughter in their falls-count-anywhere match against Cactus Jack and Steve Austin.

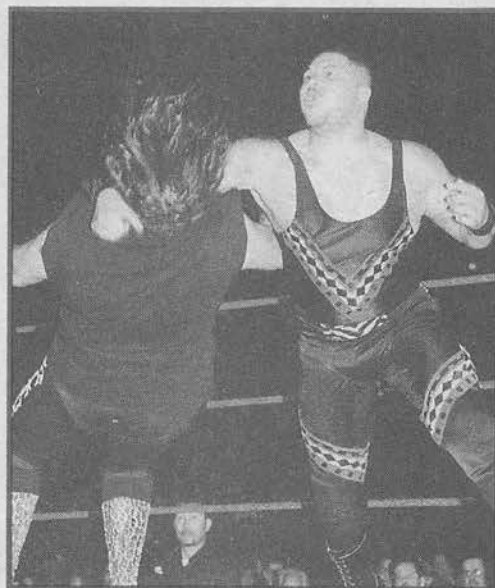
Cactus Jack started off this match against Brown, overwhelming him with kicks and punches. Brown did retaliate, though, with a thunderous clothesline that leveled Cactus. Brown backed a dazed Cactus into the ropes with a series of punches, but Cactus recovered and clotheslined Brown to the arena floor.

Maivia then approached his fallen partner and encouraged him to get back in the ring, which was a mistake for Brown. He climbed

through the ropes only to get knocked down by the waiting Austin. "Stone-Cold" then taunted Maivia by stretching one of Brown's arms toward Rocky, baiting him to make the tag. Maivia finally did make the tag and jumped straight into a fist fight with Austin. Maivia was knocked wobbly before Austin floored him with a shoulderblock and dove on top of him.

The action then moved outside the ring, with Austin nailing Brown with a table as Maivia battled Cactus back to the dressing room area. Several minutes later, a gloating Rocky returned to ringside, claiming that he had beaten up Cactus in the hallway. Cactus came back to ringside, though, pushing a janitor's cart filled with foreign objects.

Cactus continued to battle Maivia, using a table and the ringside steps as weapons. They eventually went into the crowd while Austin and Brown fought in the ring with weapons fished out of the cart. Austin threw a box at



D-Lo Brown was quite impressive when he teamed with Rocky Maivia against Steve Austin and Cactus Jack at Madison Square Garden. Austin and Cactus, however, were relentless.

Brown's head, then rammed a broom into his stomach. One "Stone-Cold stunner" later, Brown was down for the count. The victory went to Austin and Cactus.

After the match, Faarooq and Kama Mustafa stormed the ring, with Kama attacking Cactus as Faarooq went after Austin. "Stone-Cold" stood his ground in the ring, delivering "stunners" to Maivia, Faarooq, and Kama before leaving.

In other bouts: WWF light heavyweight champ Taka Michinoku pinned Brian Christopher ... Henry & Phineas Godwinn beat The Headbangers in a country whipping match ... Tom Brandi beat Marc Mero by disqualification ... Ken Shamrock beat Faarooq ... The Undertaker & The Road Warriors beat Shawn Michaels & The New Age Outlaws in a cage match ... Vader defeated Goldust ... Kane beat Chainz. □

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YOU ASKED US

(Continued from page 16)



Ben Brock, star of *Flubber*, was thrilled to meet The Giant on *The Tonight Show* recently. The lure of Hollywood is strong for The Giant, but wrestling remains his primary concern.

He can take his ghosts and his goblins and go to hell with 'em. If that freak has any sense to him, he'll stay away from 'Stone-Cold.' Then again, I might drink a few 'Steve-wis-ers,' then go kick his [butt] just for the hell of it!"

...

Q: "This question is for Kevin Nash: Have you ever thought about leaving the NWO?"—Amanda Owens, Matthews, VA

A: "That's like asking Mick Jagger if he ever wanted to leave The Rolling Stones," Nash replied. "Why would I want to walk away from the biggest gig of my life? Sure, we have our differences from time to time, just like any other wholesome, *Leave It To Beaver* family. But I tell you what, and I've said it before, once you're NWO, you're NWO for life. That's not a catch phrase, that's just the way it is. Am I gonna be hanging around the NWO when I'm 54 years old, like good ol' Mick and the Stones? I doubt it. I don't intend on becoming a dinosaur in this business like some other people I could mention."

Q: "My question is for The Giant: I recently saw you on *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno and I've heard that you've been in a few movies lately. Would you ever forsake your wrestling career for the bright lights of Hollywood?"—Gloria Kalko, Stockton, CA

A: "That's a tough question," said The Giant. "Right now, my wrestling career is my top priority. I jumped at the chance to appear in a few movies recently and I found they were a lot of fun. If I became a full-time actor, I probably would take it more seriously and it wouldn't be so fun anymore. That's how wrestling is. I have to be serious in order to survive in the ring. I'll have fun watching videotapes of my matches after I've retired. Movie-making is a good emotional release right now. But if I become a big star—who knows? I may end up struggling with that question before long. I will promise you one thing, though. I will never come back as The Hollywood Giant." □

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November 1977: Bruno Sammartino vs. Superstar Graham: The Slaughter Must Be Stopped ... Now! Also: Snuka-Studd, Jones-Slater, Gagne & Brunzell, Ox Baker, Mil Mascaras, Stasiak & Steele, Rick Steamboat, Dino Bravo.

December 1978: The Injury And The Giant Must Keep Secret. Also: Victor Rivera, Brisco-Spoiler, Heenan & Bockwinkel, Tully Blanchard, Mulligan, Dino Bravo, D. Funk-Race, Rocky Johnson.

March 1979: Backlund vs. Ladd: Did Bruno's "Interference" Cost Ladd The WWWF Title? Also: Angelo Mosca, Dick Murdoch, Peter Maivia, Bob Orton Jr., Bockwinkel-Rhodes, Brisco-Race, Crusher Blackwell, Lewin-T. Funk.

September 1980: Why Ernie Ladd Says ... "I'm Tired Of Being Your King." Also: Rick Steamboat, Mad Dog Vachon, Bugsy McGraw, Patera-Patterson, Manny Fernandez, Bob Backlund, Greg Gagne, Mike Sharpe. **October 1980: Kevin Von Erich Wins The Missouri Title From Kevin Von Erich!** Also: Mr. Wrestling II, Pedro Morales, Superstar Graham, Dusty Rhodes, Idol-Race, Rick McGraw.

February 1981: Larry Zbyszko's Claim: "Tony Garea Begged Me Not To Hurt Him!" Also: The Grappler, Race-Patera, Hussein Arab, Humberdink-Rhodes, Gilberts, Mr. Wrestling II, Bravo-Bockwinkel.

January 1982: Rich vs. Masked Superstar: Can Tommy Rich Survive As Georgia's Last Hero? Also: Kiwis, Bockwinkel-Atlas, Mascaras-Steamboat, Sullivan-Taylor, Bruno Sammartino.

April 1982: How Jack Brisco Controls Ric Flair's Championship Destiny. Also: Tito Santana, Valentine-Atlas, Bob Roop, Armstrongs, John Studd, Eric Embry.

June 1982: Ric Flair vs. Rick Steamboat: How The NWA Belt Strangled Wrestling's Greatest Friendship. Also: Piper-Armstrong, Hussein Arab, Bruno Sammartino, Adonis & Ventura, Butch Reed.

July 1982: Harley Race—His Destiny Is In The Hands Of Tommy Rich. Also: Rick Steamboat, Chief Jay Strongbow, Buzz Sawyer, Ric Flair, Roddy Piper.

December 1982: Morales vs. Snuka: Does Pedro Deserve To Be Intercontinental Champion? Also: Bob Orton Jr., Kamala, Rich & Rhodes, Barry Windham, Ted DiBiase, JYD-Bockwinkel, Oliver Humperdink.

February 1983: Exclusive Coverage: Nick Bockwinkel Regains The AWA Title From Otto Wanz. Also: Backlund-Graham, Rich-Sawyer, Barry Windham, Martel & Garea, McDaniel & Piper, Kamala.

July 1983: Ric Flair: "I Wrestle The Men Backlund Is Afraid Of." Also: Putski-Adonis, Kevin Sullivan, Bob Roop, Martel-Heenan.

September 1983: Nick Bockwinkel Forces Hulk Hogan Into Exile: And

Only The Fans Can Bring Him Back. Also: Brisco, Blackwell-Kerry-Race, Paul Ellering, Mulligan & Windham.

June 1984: David Von Erich—We'll Never Forget You. Also: Billy Jack, Flair-Race, Bockwinkel-Bravo, Brickhouse Brown.

August 1984: Garvin vs. Roberts: "Hands Of Stone" Crushes "The Snake." Also: Freebirds-Destruction Inc., Sawyer-Sullivan, Lawler & Dillon, McDaniel-Race.

September 1984: Kerry Von Erich Wins The NWA Title: For David ... For Texas ... For Wrestling! Also: Billy Jack, Bundy & Superstar-Road Warriors, Piper & Orndorff-Johnson & Atlas, Rick Martel.

November 1984: The \$50,000 Full-Nelson Challenge Match: Billy Jack Gets Revenge Against Superstar Graham. Also: Piper-Hogan, Heenan & Saito, Brody & Hansen, Von Erichs.

December 1984: The Tully Blanchard-Rick Steamboat Feud: Will Dusty Rhodes End It ... Or Make It Worse? Also: Tito Santana, Martel-Atlas, D. Funk, Mike Von Erich, Williams-Taylor.

January 1985: Kerry Von Erich: "I've Got Ric Flair's NWA Title Within My Grasp." Also: Albano & Lauper, Koloffs & Kernodle, Road Warriors, Lawler & Rude, Scott McGhee.

April 1985: Six-Man Riot! Road Warriors & Ellering vs. Rhodes, Rich, & Anderson. Also: Tonga Kid, tomorrow's stars, Adams-Kevin, Flair-Jack, Terminators.

July 1985: It's A Dog's Life ... And Junkyard Dog Wouldn't Trade It With Anyone! Also: Backlund-Martel, Kernodle-Koloff, Butch Reed, Hernandez & Sunshine, Mike Graham.

October 1985: David Shultz Gets An NWA Title Shot: Ric Flair—"I Wrestle The Men Hulk Hogan Is Afraid Of!" Also: Misty Blue, Rick Martel, Kendall Windham, George Steele, Killer Brooks, wrestling greats' all-time top 10.

March 1987: Ivan & Khrushchev's Kremlin Orders: Crush Nikita Koloff's Russian Revolution! Also: Barry Windham, One Man Gang, Brian Adias, Savage-Steamboat, Jimmy Snuka.

April 1987: Hulk's Giant Tasks: Hercules, Kamala ... And Andre? Also: Luger-Allen, Rich-Lawler, Rude & Fernandez-Rock 'n' Rolls, Kevin Von Erich, Skandor Akbar.

July 1987: Missy Hyatt: Will She Kiss And Tell In The WWF? Also: Chris Adams, Hart Foundation, Luger & Horsemen, Nikita-Cornette, Stan Hansen.

September 1987: Independence Day! Also: Hennig-Bockwinkel, Hart Foundation, Koloffs, Bubba Rogers, Missy Hyatt.

December 1987: Hulk Hogan: Will He Be Drowned By The New Wave Of Challengers? Also: Hennig-Lawler, Windham-Steiner, Flair-Williams, Brutus Beefcake, Ronnie Garvin.

February 1988: Ric Flair Admits: "I'm Nothing Without The NWA Belt!" Also: Kerry Von Erich, Jim Cornette, Hogan-Andre, Hennig-Lawler, Terry Taylor.

March 1988: After Four Years As Champion ... Only Hulk Hogan Can

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October 1988: The Fantastics Declare: "We Will Not Share Our Fans With The Rock 'n' Roll Express!" Also: Rhodes-Windham, Curt Hennig, Roberts-Rude, Rougeau, Jim Garvin.

January 1989: The Horsemen Destroyed! The World Title Gained! But The Midnight Express Must Still Prove Themselves! Also: Top Guns, Hart & Rougeau, Andre-Savage-Hulk, Terry Gordy, Kevin Von Erich.

February 1989: The Road Warriors: "Sting, Dusty, & The Fans Can Go To Hell!" Also: Madusa Miceli, Blue Blazer, Warrior-Hogan, Bigelow-Gordy, Eddie Gilbert.

March 1989: Scared Stiff! "Don't Say Snake!" Also: Jeff Jarrett, Cactus Jack, Ric Flair, Bam Bam Bigelow, Hercules, Iron Sheik.

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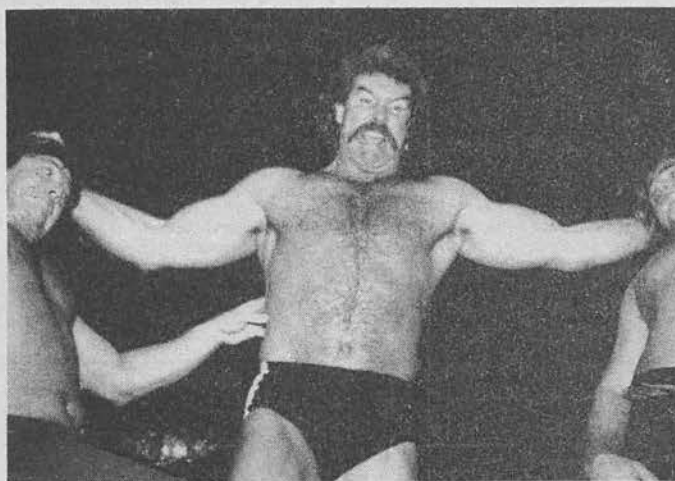
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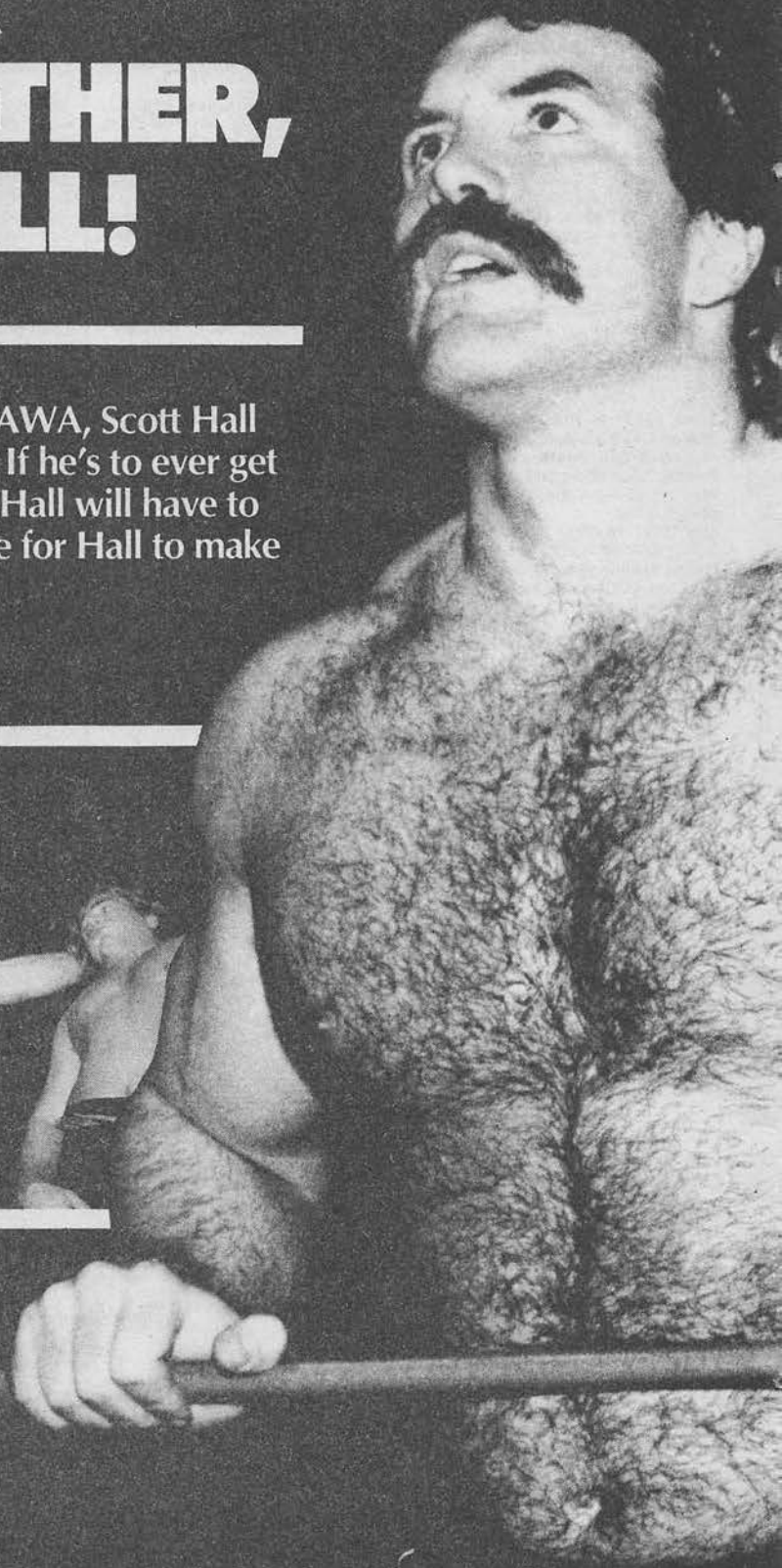
Memo To A Should-Be Champion:

GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER, SCOTT HALL!

Once considered the future of the AWA, Scott Hall must now consider his own future. If he's to ever get back on the path to superstardom, Hall will have to make 1988 a very big year. It's time for Hall to make his move—now!



The powerful Scott Hall slams the heads of Marty Jannetty and Shawn Michaels. Since becoming a professional wrestler, Hall has not lived up to the great expectations that were pegged on him in his rookie year.



WRESTLING PROMOTERS TAKE one look at Scott Hall and drool. The tall (6'8" and 290 pounds), dark, and handsome young man looks like he can rule the wrestling world at will, drawing the men to matches with his power and domination of opponents, the women with his classic good looks.

Then they take one look at Hall's record and sigh disappointedly: runner-up for Most Improved Wrestler of 1986, AWA World tag team champion with Curt Hennig for four months of that same year ... and

nothing else. No singles titles to show for his four years in the game. And over the past year, he's floated from the AWA to Florida to Japan to Memphis, back to Japan, and then back to Memphis. With little result.

Scott Hall is a supreme talent on a roundabout road to nowhere. He is drowning in his potential, trying to live up to his press releases.

The April 1986 issue of our sister publication *Inside Wrestling* haunts his every move. In "Ready For The Hall Of Fame: The AWA's Future Is In Scott Hall's Hands!" we wrote:

... and as Flair did over the decade that followed his debut, Scott Hall has the potential to galvanize the sport of professional wrestling through his formidable size and his ever-developing skills (learned at the hands of such ringmasters as Flair, Barry Windham, Magnum T.A., Terry Taylor, Harley Race, Pat O'Connor, Curt Hennig, and Rick Martel). Indeed, Scott Hall could do for a suffering AWA what Flair did for the

NWA, or what Hulk Hogan has done for the WWF over the years.

But he didn't. Hall got caught up in a senseless feud with the South African madman Col. DeBeers and eventually fled from the area. In Florida, his title hopes were again side-tracked by a feud with Kevin Sullivan and Sir Oliver Humperdink. Wherever he goes, Hall is targeted for evil. Each time, he falls into the trap—only the trap is his own.

The editors of *The Wrestler* are deeply disturbed by Hall's career course. The Scott Hall career blueprint called for a world championship by 1987; 1988 at the latest. Instead, Hall is struggling trying to get back on track in the CWA. His name recognition is fading. He hasn't wrestled for a world title in nearly two years. And we're not about to sit back and watch a great athlete's career fade into oblivion.

It's time to get your act together, Scott Hall!

"Scott Hall is taller than Hogan, weighs as much as Hogan, and although Hulk is more muscular, Scott has a body more suited for professional wrestling," said former wrestling great Pat O'Connor. "He's faster and gets around the ring better. He also has the training. Hogan is purely a brawler and didn't have the teachers that Hall had. Believe me, Scott has all the markings of a superstar. I don't know what's happened to him."

Photos Brian Tirpak & Sam Lowe

WRESTLER CLASSIC!

Okay, a lot of you out there would probably like to see Scott Hall get his act together *now*. Check out this "Wrestler Classic" from 10 years ago to find out why we were sending such a message to him back in 1988

SCOTT HALL

(Continued from page 37)

Actually, what's happened to him is the same thing that happened to Tommy Rich. At 23 years old, "Wild-fire" won the NWA World championship, but shortly after losing the belt he got caught up in a long, useless feud with Buzz Sawyer. This feud almost destroyed both men's

careers; Rich, it appears, is just now recovering from the physical and mental effects.

The Hall-DeBeers feud was destructive to both men. Neither was a clear winner and neither has been in the spotlight since the feud ended. DeBeers has wrestled for several

small independent promotions; Hall has tried to regain the momentum he lost during that feud and is only now showing signs of being able to do so.

"That's really what happened," said Greg Gagne. "He lost momentum. Scott was really hot for a while. In fact, many people considered him the best wrestler in the AWA and possibly the best drawing card. But just at the time he should've been going after [Nick] Bockwinkel's title, he started getting caught up in the whole apartheid issue with DeBeers. It totally threw him off."

In Florida, Hall had to sidetrack his title hopes when Sullivan, Humpardink, and Paul E. Dangerously sent a 6'3", 330-pound monster named Tombstone after him. Tombstone, however, never held the Florida title. When Hall finally left the area last summer, he hadn't either.

Hall's arrival in the CWA can be taken as a positive sign.

"Many of us were very excited when Scott decided to come to Memphis," said Lawler. "Although it's going to make it tougher on all of us, it's great to have a wrestler like Hall around because he has so much potential for greatness."

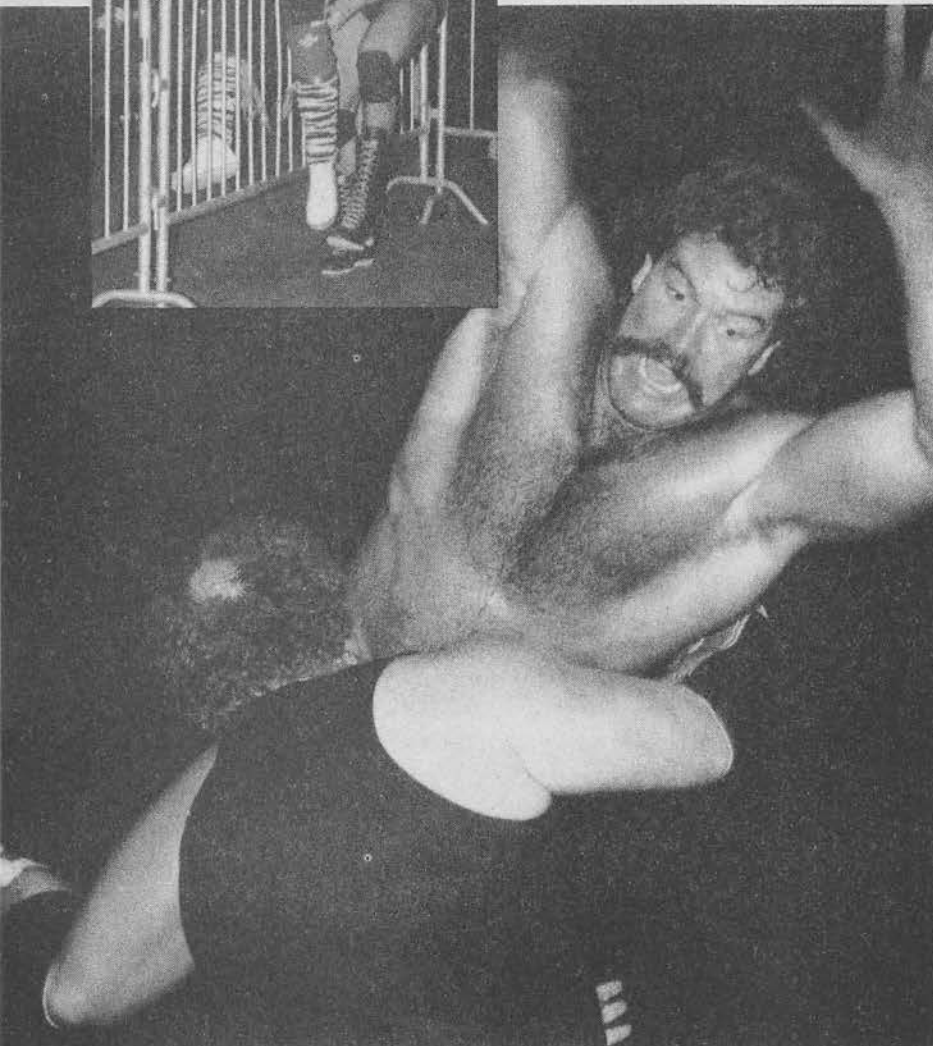
It also puts him in line for a shot at Curt Hennig's AWA World title. Hall, who is currently ranked fourth in the CWA, is clearly within striking distance of a match with Hennig.

He can't blow it this time. Although Hall is still young at 28, he's already lost too many chances. Unless he's careful, Hall will be labeled as an underachiever and his value to promoters will drop markedly.

Scott Hall appears to be on the rebound, but he must go all the way. He can't get involved in any more useless feuds. His one goal must be a major singles championship. He's already a year overdue and time is no longer the greatest of his considerable commodities. □



Hall drops Michaels on the ring barrier (left) and executes a flying bodypress on Don Bass (below). If he can establish himself as a major star in the CWA, Hall will have an excellent shot at winning the AWA World title held by his former partner Curt Hennig.



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3734	Ace Frehley	2871	The Cure	6665	Ian Moore	6371	Natalie Merchant
2684	Adam Ant	3262	Danger Danger	4631	Indigo Girls	6331	Ned's Atomic Dustbin
2371	Aerosmith	3265	Danzig	4691	INXS	9682	Neil Young
6673	Alanis Morissette	6283	Dave Matthews Band	4761	Iron Maiden	6461	Nine Inch Nails
2664	Alice Cooper	2691	David Bowie	5224	Jackyl	6471	Nirvana
2541	Alice in Chains	7681	David Lee Roth	5374	Jesus & Mary Chain	6722	NRBQ
2551	Allman Bros.	3332	Deep Purple	7622	Jill Sobule	6276	Oasis
2681	Anthrax	3331	Def Leppard	2831	Jimmy Buffett	6332	Offspring
2527	B-52s	3341	Deicide	6725	Joan Osborne	6723	Ozzy Osbourne
2233	Bad Company	2353	Del Amitri	7282	Joe Satriani	4275	P.J. Harvey
2276	Barenaked Ladies	3371	Depeche Mode	6351	John Mellencamp	7243	Page / Plant
2323	Beatles	3461	Dinosaur Jr.	5831	Judas Priest	7263	Pantera
2325	Beck	3462	Dio	5462	King Crimson	7321	Pearl Jam
2352	Belly	3651	Dokken	5461	King's X	4221	Peter Dinklage
2382	Better Than Ezra	3733	Dream Theater	5472	KISS	2653	Phil Collins
2444	Big Head Todd/Monsters	3871	Duran Duran	5674	Korn	7441	Phish
4361	Billy Idol	3242	The Eagles	5242	L.A. Guns	7462	Pink Floyd
5632	Billy Joel	6227	Edwin McCain	5721	Lenny Kravitz	7641	Poison
2462	Biohazard	2671	Elvis Costello	5387	Letters To Cleo	7671	Porno For Pyros
2561	Bjork	3681	Enuff Z' nuff	5633	Lisa Loeb	7731	Presidents of the USA
2523	Black Crowes	2525	Eric Clapton	5484	Live	7745	Primus
2524	Black Sabbath	3832	Everclear	5651	Lollapalooza Tour	1831	Queen
2544	Blind Melon	3981	Extreme	5871	Luscious Jackson	1832	Queensryche
2582	Blues Traveler	3222	Face To Face	6275	Marilyn Manson	7363	R.E.M.
2661	Bon Jovi	3442	Fight	7931	Matthew Sweet	7232	Radiohead
2731	Breeders	3451	Filter	6321	Meat Puppets	7265	Ramones
2766	Brother Cane	3471	Firehouse	6322	Meatloaf	7266	Rancid
7771	Bruce Springsteen	3663	Foo Fighters	6241	Megadeth	7832	Rod Stewart
2852	Bulletboys	4276	Garbage	3841	Melissa Etheridge	7651	Rolling Stones
2872	Bush	8462	George Thorogood	6354	Melvins	7652	Rollins Band
2268	Candlebox	4461	Gin Blossoms	6382	Metallica	7871	Rush
2461	Cinderella	4641	Go Go's	6443	Mighty M. Bosstones	7872	Rusted Root
2656	Collective Soul	4664	Goo Goo Dolls	6463	Ministry	7261	Santana
2673	Corrosion of Conformity	4721	Grateful Dead	6631	Moody Blues	7262	Scorpions
2683	Counting Crows	4724	Gravity Kills	6672	Morrissey	7374	Sepultura
2726	Cracker	4737	Green Day	6682	Motley Crue	7383	Seven Mary Three
2723	Cranberries	4861	Guns N' Roses	6681	Motorhead	7453	Silverchair
2727	Crash Test Dummies	4921	GWAR	6721	Mr. Big	7541	Skid Row
2765	Crowded House	4672	H.O.R.D.E. Tour			7526	Slash's Snakepit
						7523	Slaughter
						7524	Slayer
						7621	Smashing Pumpkins
						7643	Smithereens
						7661	Sonic Youth
						7683	Soul Asylum
						7682	Soundgarden
						7722	Spacehog
						7746	Spin Doctors
						7826	Stabbing Westward
						7831	Steely Dan
						6452	Steve Miller
						8242	Steve Vai
						7842	Sting
						7863	Stone Temple Pilots
						7841	Suicidal Tendencies
						8321	Tears For Fears
						6841	Ted Nugent
						8371	Tesla
						8372	Testament
						8432	The The
						8431	They Might Be Giants
						8621	Toad the Wet Sprocket
						8622	Toadies
						7381	Tom Petty
						8662	Tool
						8722	Traffic
						8741	Trixter
						8971	Type O Negative
						8221	U2
						8362	UFO
						8451	Ugly Kid Joe
						8743	Urge Overkill
						8262	Van Halen
						6341	Vince Neil
						8461	Violent Femmes
						9272	Warrant
						9331	Weezer
						9441	White Zombie
						9371	Yes
						6251	Yngwie Malmsteen

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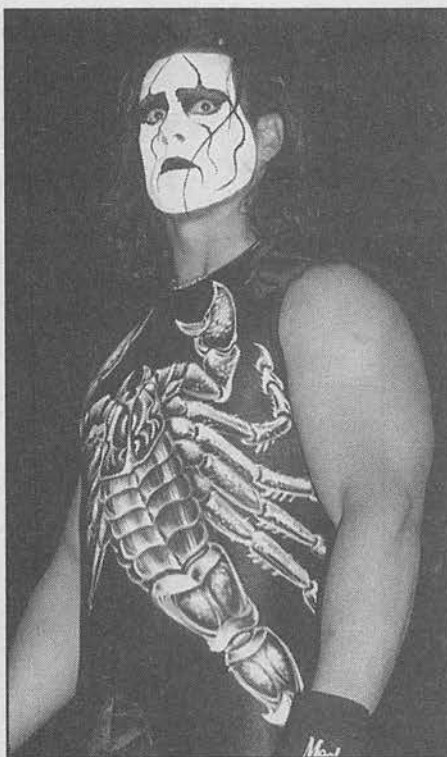
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Wrestler^{THE}

TOP 10

- 1 SHAWN MICHAELS**
234, San Antonio, TX
(1) WWF World champion
- 2 DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE**
260, Tampa, FL
(3) U.S. heavyweight champion
- 3 STEVE AUSTIN**
241, Dallas, TX
(8) No. 2 contender: WWF World title
- 4 STING**
260, Venice Beach, CA
(2) No. 1 contender: WCW World title
- 5 THE UNDERTAKER**
328, parts unknown
(4) No. 3 contender: WWF World title
- 6 LEX LUGER**
265, Chicago, IL
(-) No. 4 contender: WCW World title
- 7 REY MISTERIO JR.**
140, San Diego, CA
(-) WCW cruiserweight champion
- 8 ROCKY MAIVIA**
272, Pearl City, HI
(-) WWF Intercontinental champion
- 9 OWEN HART**
227, Calgary, Alberta
(6) WWF European champion
- 10 TAZ**
248, Red Hook, NY
(10) ECW TV champion



Sting

TAG TEAMS

- 1 SCOTT HALL & KEVIN NASH**
Combined weight: 646 pounds
(-) WCW World tag team champions
- 2 BILLY GUNN & JESSE JAMES**
Combined weight: 496 pounds
(1) WWF World tag team champions
- 3 RICK & SCOTT STEINER**
Combined weight: 483 pounds
(2) No. 1 contenders: WCW tag title
- 4 CHRIS CANDIDO & LANCE STORM**
Combined weight: 457 pounds
(3) ECW tag team champions
- 5 MASA CHONO & KEIJI MUTO**
Combined weight: 480 pounds
(4) IWGP tag team champions
- 6 THE ROAD WARRIORS**
Combined weight: 560 pounds
(-) No. 1 contenders: WWF tag title
- 7 HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY & SHAWN MICHAELS**
Combined weight: 513 pounds
(-) No. 2 contenders: WWF tag title
- 8 THE BARBARIAN & MENG**
Combined weight: 589 pounds
(10) No. 2 contenders: WCW tag title
- 9 HENRY & PHINEAS GODWINN**
Combined weight: 531 pounds
(7) No. 3 contenders: WWF tag title
- 10 CACTUS JACK & CHAINSAW CHARLIE**
Combined weight: 524 pounds
(-) No. 4 contenders: WWF tag title

WCW

World Champion:
TITLE VACANT

- 1—STING**
(C) 260, Venice Beach, CA
- 2—HULK HOGAN**
(2) 275, Venice Beach, CA
- 3—DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE**
(1) 260, Tampa, FL
- 4—LEX LUGER**
(4) 265, Chicago, IL
- 5—REY MISTERIO JR.**
(-) 140, San Diego, CA
- 6—BOOKER T**
(5) 250, Harlem, NY
- 7—RIC FLAIR**
(-) 243, Charlotte, NC
- 8—THE GIANT**
(-) 430, parts unknown
- 9—CURT HENNIG**
(6) 235, Minneapolis, MN
- 10—RICK MARTEL**
(-) 236, Quebec City, Quebec

WWF

World Champion:

- SHAWN MICHAELS**
(C) 234, San Antonio, TX
- 1—ROCKY MAIVIA**
(1) 272, Pearl City, HI
 - 2—STEVE AUSTIN**
(4) 241, Dallas, TX
 - 3—THE UNDERTAKER**
(2) 328, parts unknown
 - 4—OWEN HART**
(3) 227, Calgary, Alberta
 - 5—KEN SHAMROCK**
(5) 235, San Bernardino, CA
 - 6—KANE**
(7) 345, parts unknown
 - 7—VADER**
(9) 450, Denver, CO
 - 8—MARC MERO**
(-) 235, Buffalo, NY
 - 9—JEFF JARRETT**
(-) 230, Nashville, TN
 - 10—TOM BRANDI**
(-) 251, Norristown, PA

ECW

ECW Champion:
SHANE DOUGLAS
(C) 240, Pittsburgh, PA

- 1—TAZ**
(1) 248, Red Hook, NY
- 2—ROB VAN DAM**
(4) 240, Battle Creek, MI
- 3—SABU**
(2) 225, Bombay
- 4—TOMMY DREAMER**
(6) 245, Yonkers, NY
- 5—THE SANDMAN**
(3) 244, Philadelphia, PA
- 6—BAM BAM BIGELOW**
(-) 368, Mt. Laurel, NJ
- 7—JUSTIN CREDIBLE**
(5) 225, Waterbury, CT
- 8—AL SNOW**
(-) 232, Lima, OH
- 9—CHRIS CANDIDO**
(-) 226, Carteret, NJ
- 10—SPIKE DUDLEY**
(-) 155, parts unknown

MCW

MCW Champion:
WOLFIE D

- (3) 231, Nashville, TN
- 1—TERRY GOLDEN**
(C) 241, Venice Beach, CA
 - 2—DOUG GILBERT**
(4) 241, Lexington, TN
 - 3—BILLY TRAVIS**
(6) 239, Dallas, TX
 - 4—COLORADO KID**
(1) 231, Denver, CO
 - 5—FLASH FLANAGAN**
(2) 221, Indianapolis, IN
 - 6—NICK DINSMORE**
(-) 235, Louisville, KY
 - 7—STEVEN DUNN**
(5) 240, Dallas, TX
 - 8—J.C. ICE**
(-) 221, Memphis, TN
 - 9—DUTCH MANTEL**
(10) 224, Oil Trough, TX
 - 10—FRENCHY RIVIERA**
(7) 450, Paris, France

OFFICIAL RATINGS

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board.

All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue. while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue.

CUMULATIVE RATINGS

These ratings are based on the past 10 issues of this magazine. We have examined our ratings for each of these issues in our Top 10 and Tag Team categories only, and assigned each position a point value: 10 points for a first-place rating, nine for second place, and so on. The point values for all wrestlers in the past 10 issues have been compiled, with a possible maximum of 100 points. Each issue we'll present the top five finishers in each category. While our regular ratings reflect the past month, these cumulative ratings give an indication of wider trends in the sport.

SINGLES

1—THE UNDERTAKER.....	80 points
2—LEX LUGER.....	63 points
3—DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE.....	39 points
4—BRET HART.....	39 points
5—STEVE AUSTIN.....	34 points

TAG TEAMS

1—RICK & SCOTT STEINER.....	77 points
2—THE ROAD WARRIORS.....	67 points
3—SCOTT HALL & KEVIN NASH.....	51 points
4—HENRY & PHINEAS GODWINN.....	34 points
5—THE GIANT & LEX LUGER.....	31 points

For period ended January 22, 1998

ALL-PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Michael Modest; 1—Tony Jones; 2—Maxx Justice; 3—Robert Thompson; 4—Erin O'Grady; 5—Vic Grimes; 6—Donovan Morgan; 7—Frank Murdoch; 8—Boom Boom Comini; 9—Chris Cole; 10—Dic Grimes.

CENTURY WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Title Vacant; 1—Tony Rumble; 2—Vic Steamboat; 3—Abdullah The Butcher; 4—Knuckles Nelson; 5—Tony Atlas; 6—Ace Darling; 7—Joel Davis; 8—El Mascarado; 9—Devon Storm; 10—Pink Assassin.

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION: Champion—Glen Osbourne; 1—Blue Thunder; 2—Reckless Youth; 3—Cheetah Master; 4—Ace Darling; 5—Lance Diamond; 6—J.R. Ryder; 7—John Rock; 8—Mr. Ooh La La; 9—Ravishing Ronny; 10—Boogie Woogie Brown.

FRONTIER MARTIAL ARTS WRESTLING: Champion—Masato Tanaka; 1—Hayabusa; 2—Atsushi Onita; 3—Gladiator; 4—Yukihiko Kanemura; 5—Mr. Gannosuke; 6—Hisakatsu Oya; 7—Koji Nakagawa; 8—Tatsuhiko Kuroda; 9—Hideki Hosaka; 10—Ricky Fuji.

GRANDE WRESTLING ALLIANCE: Champion—Bob Steele; 1—Flexx Wheeler; 2—Bad Boy L.H.T.; 3—Flamingo Kidd; 4—Jake Lawless; 5—Alexi Takarov; 6—Eric Von Magnusson; 7—Kwame; 8—Cuban Assassin; 9—Atlas Rivera; 10—Ron Starr.

JERSEY ALL-PRO WRESTLING: Champion—911; 1—Rik Ratchet; 2—Pit Bull II; 3—Magic; 4—Ace Darling; 5—Don Montoya; 6—Adorable Anthony; 7—Devon Storm; 8—Patch; 9—Gino Caruso; 10—Kane D.

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Tiger Khan; 1—Reckless Youth; 2—Mr. Ooh La La; 3—Lance Diamond; 4—Cheetah Master; 5—Mike Quackenbush; 6—Glen Osbourne; 7—Blue Thunder; 8—J.R. Ryder; 9—Boogie Woogie Brown; 10—John Rock.

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION: Champion—Ripper; 1—Krush; 2—Italian Stallion; 3—George South; 4—Madd Maxxine; 5—Cruel Connection II; 6—Flaming Youth; 7—Terry Austin; 8—Chris Hamrick; 9—Wasted Youth; 10—Gladiator II.

NEW JAPAN

IWGP Champion:
KENSUKE SASAKI

(C) 233, Tokyo, Japan

- 1—KEIJI MUTO
(1) 245, Yamanshi, Japan
- 2—SHIRO KOSHINAKA
(-) 225, Tokyo, Japan
- 3—SHINYA HASHIMOTO
(4) 287, Gifu, Japan
- 4—MASA CHONO
(2) 235, Tokyo, Japan
- 5—JUSHIN LIGER
(9) 206, Hiroshima, Japan
- 6—YUJI NIGATA
(-) 229, Tokyo, Japan
- 7—SHINJIRO OTANI
(10) 215, Yokohama, Japan
- 8—HIROYOSHI TENZAN
(3) 270, Tokyo, Japan
- 9—NAOYA OGAWA
(5) 286, Tokyo, Japan
- 10—KAZUO YAMAZAKI
(6) 182, Tokyo, Japan

ALL-JAPAN

Triple Crown Champion:
MITSU HARU MISAWA

(C) 228, Ashikaga, Japan

- 1—TOSHIKI KAWADA
(1) 245, Ashikaga, Japan
- 2—AKIRA TAUE
(2) 265, Chichibu, Japan
- 3—JUN AKIYAMA
(4) 230, Hiroshima, Japan
- 4—KENTA KOBASHI
(3) 261, Fukuchiyama, Japan
- 5—STEVE WILLIAMS
(5) 265, Norman, OK
- 6—GARY ALBRIGHT
(6) 343, Billings, MT
- 7—STAN HANSEN
(7) 322, Borger, TX
- 8—TAKAO OMORI
(8) 221, Tokyo, Japan
- 9—TAMON HONDA
(9) 191, Tokyo, Japan
- 10—MAUNAKEA MOSSMAN
(10) 245, Honolulu, HI

EMLL

EMLL Champion:
UNIVERSO 2000

(5) 215, parts unknown

- 1—RAYO DE JALISCO JR.
(1) 270, Guadalajara, Mexico
- 2—CIEN CARAS
(3) 235, Lagos de Moreno, Mexico
- 3—EL HIJO DEL SANTO
(2) 180, Tulancingo, Mexico
- 4—NEGRO CASAS
(6) 175, Mexico City, Mexico
- 5—BLACK WARRIOR
(7) 221, Mexico City, Mexico
- 6—ULTIMO DRAGON
(4) 175, Mexico City, Mexico
- 7—BLUE PANTHER
(-) 215, Mexico City, Mexico
- 8—ATLANTIS
(8) 180, Guadalajara, Mexico
- 9—EMILIO CHARLES JR.
(9) 222, Mexico City, Mexico
- 10—FELINO
(10) 165, Mexico City, Mexico

PROMO AZTECA

Promo Azteca Champion:
PIRATA MORGAN

(-) 227, Mexico City, Mexico

- 1—LA PARKA
(3) 235, Torreon, Mexico
- 2—MASCARA SAGRADA
(1) 220, Mexico City, Mexico
- 3—PIERROTH JR.
(4) 240, Mexico City, Mexico
- 4—SILVER KING
(2) 215, Mexico City, Mexico
- 5—LIZMARK JR.
(5) 214, Mexico City, Mexico
- 6—KONNAN
(C) 237, Mexico City, Mexico
- 7—TINIEBLAS JR.
(7) 219, Guadalajara, Mexico
- 8—ULTIMO REBELDE
(10) 210, Coahuila, Mexico
- 9—SUPER ASTRO
(8) 223, Mexico City, Mexico
- 10—JERRY ESTRADA
(9) 220, Mexico City, Mexico

Ratings

ANALYSIS

More (yes, more!) tag team problems. How many times have we used this column to lament the lack of quality teams in the WWF? Or just the lack of quality tag teams overall in wrestling? Well, it's that time again. Only this time the big problem is in WCW.

Most notably, there is the situation involving **Rick and Scott Steiner**. Even before they lost the WCW World tag team title to **Scott Hall** and **Kevin Nash** on January 12, the brothers from Michigan were having trouble getting along. Rick was furious when his brother showed up late for a title defense against **Scott Norton** and **Vincent**. He won the match on his own, but Scott didn't appear until after it was over and Norton and Vincent were pummeling Rick.

Rick was also incensed when, during the debut of **Thunder**, Scott made no effort whatsoever to tag him. He beat **Marcus Bagwell** and **Konnor** relatively easily, but the look on Rick's face after the match was over made it clear to everyone that he wasn't happy about what happened.



Marcus Bagwell

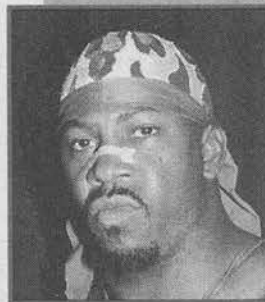
Could this really happen? Could the Steiners really be headed for a major feud ... with each other? **Ted DiBiase**, their manager, admitted that he thought so and said he was trying desperately to get them to talk out whatever differences they had. What a blow to tag team wrestling a Steiners split would strike. For now, we're happy that we're able to place them in the top 10 of our tag team rankings. Will we be able to do the same next month and the month after that? We can only hope.

The other WCW team we're worried about is **Harlem Heat**. **Booker T** captured the TV championship with a decisive victory over **Disco Inferno** on December 29 and is defending it regularly, but where does this leave the Heat? **Stevie Ray** has not been as successful in singles competition, and there were rumors that the two men had a big argument after Booker's win over Disco. If certain reports are to be believed, Stevie Ray was adamant about getting a title shot for himself, but his brother didn't want to talk about it.

The Heat, because they haven't competed much as a team of late, have dropped down in our tag team rankings and are in danger of falling out completely. We'd hate to see these two brothers cease wrestling as a team, and we

certainly don't want to see them feuding with each other.

If the Steiners and Harlem Heat were to both split up, what teams would be left in WCW/NWO? Hall and Nash



Stevie Ray

... **Public Enemy**: a team that's rarely seen in WCW these days) ... **The Barbarian** and **Meng**: who are struggling (see the story on page 38) and also seem more interested in singles now ... and not much else.

And while we're on the subject of tag teams, we should make some points about what's going on in ECW. **Chris Candido** and **Lance Storm** have

looked great since they beat **Doug Furnas** and **Phil Lafon** for the belts in December, but now they're not getting along. Seems Candido is upset that **Sunny**, his girlfriend, is so fond of Storm. So that alliance isn't looking like it will last long.

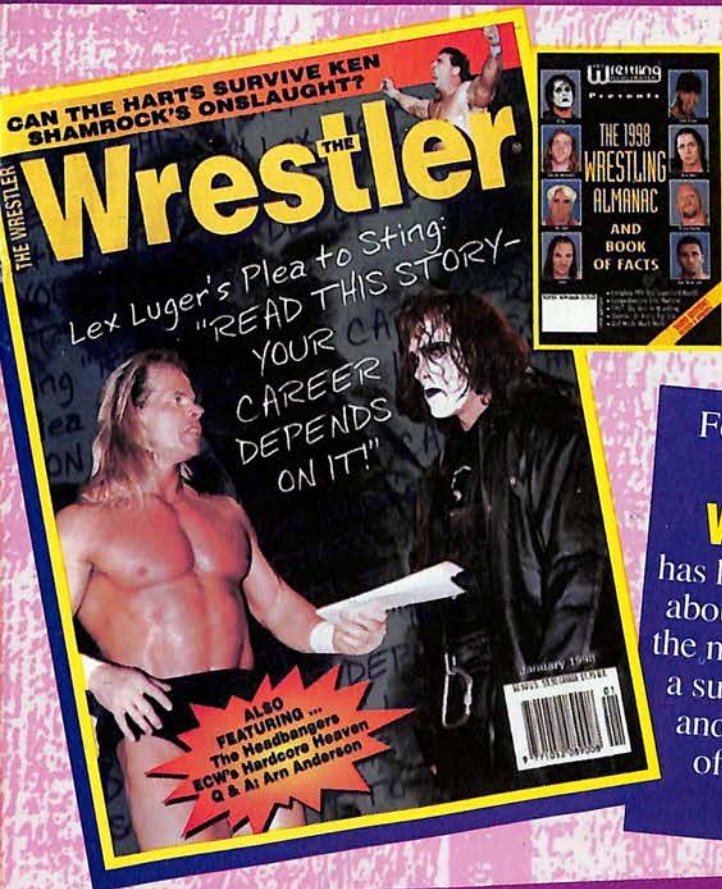
And there have also been problems between **The Gangstanators**, **New Jack** and **John Kronus**, the unlikely duo that captured the ECW tag belts last September and held them for nearly a month. They have bickered in public a lot lately.

In terms of technical wrestling ability, New Jack and Kronus don't compare well to many of the great tag teams of all-time, but they do work well together, and they've always been fun to watch, especially if you like your wrestling very violent. The Gangstanators, by the way, aren't in this issue's tag team ratings, and if they don't find a way to work out their differences, they might never be in the ratings as a team again.

As of press time, the state of tag team wrestling in the WWF was actually not all that bad. The federation had **Billy Gunn** and **Jesse James**, **The Road Warriors**, **The Headbangers**, **Skull** and **Eight-Ball**, **Henry** and **Phineas Godwinn**, **The Blackjacks**, **The Rock 'n' Roll Express**, **The Truth Commission**, and a few other duos clamoring for good spots in the ratings. At least there's some depth there. So news on tag team wrestling isn't all bad. □

Until next month ... If you have any questions or comments related to what you see on this page or our ratings in general, we want to hear from you. Write to: "Ratings Analysis," c/o THE WRESTLER, Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

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